INTRODUCTION

When French military officers first projected films at the palace of the sultan of Morocco in 1913, they hoped to excite a "salutary terror" in their subjects. Coming from the Europe of the *belle epoch*, with its fascination for spirits, fortune-tellers, and esoteric parlor games, General Gallieni and Colonel Marchand lauded the pacifying powers of the cinema, saying that it "immediately gives its possessors the reputation of sorcerers."[1] They captivated their audience by magically possessing and projecting ghostly images. What real powers and possessions might be gained through such optical illusions? This book ventures to answer this question from the perspective of Casablanca, a city whose development parallels that of the mass image.

The technology of the cinema was based on the repetitive, mechanical technology of the machine gun, yet from the beginning its military implications were shrouded in debates about its status as a seventh art, a scientific tool, and a commercial venture.[2] Film frames pass through the camera and projector just as individual bullets pass through machine guns, with assembly-line regularity, yet the separate frames are visible only to those who actually handle the film stock itself. A film's projected images cast a spell of forgetfulness over the makers themselves, who lose sight of the designs of their own productions as the steady stream of light pours out pictures and sounds. While the movie screen reflects this steady current of pictures, moonlike, televisions mimic the sun, emitting their own rays into well-lit homes.

Movies and television are part of a modern visual universe that includes other mechanically reproduced images, among them pho-

tographs and posters. With the development of easily reproducible images, sights were rearranged and new objects brought into the range of vision. Everywhere, a new diffusion of images and discourses altered ways of knowing. Ideas about who or what should be seen were modified. Who shuffles pictures around once they are drawn? Who frames pictures? Who appears in them? Why are some kept hidden while others hang in conspicuous places?

These questions and many more troubled European modern artists and publics alike, and thus these new ways of producing images were often labeled as scandalous or revolutionary.[3] Yet, viewed from other continents, where the movie camera, the printing press, and photographs were often introduced all at once, these "revolutionary" forms appeared simply to carry on already existing European artistic traditions. In Europe, films, photographs, and magazines divided space and time into gridlike sections in accordance with Cartesian rationality. They altered ways of seeing but still took into account notions of square frames and perspective, which were a part of everyday European existence.[4] For all their modernity, the ways in which new image technologies were developed demonstrated certain deeply ingrained norms of sight.

Many avenues of expression were available to those who discovered and developed new image-making machines during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. To the dismay of some artists, though, the cinema mainly adapted already widespread theatrical forms. Some European intellectuals saw movies as degenerate theater; only a few sought to develop films that were not merely stories joined to images.[5] But the direction pursued by most filmmakers is not surprising, given that the illustration of stories is central to European sensibility: think of the cartoonlike progression of the Stations of the Cross. If the camera's eye promised a "vision of Cyclopes, not of man," this new, inhuman gaze developed both humanist memories and scientific and military design.[6] And while modern artists proposed new avenues for aesthetic exploration, the development of easily reproducible images gave the impression that ordinary people now had access to a pictorial universe formerly reserved for the wealthy. In Europe, for example, painted portraits had been a mainstay of elite and ecclesiastic art for centuries. But with the advent of photography everyone could suddenly examine and display his or her own image or collect those of loved ones.[7] Snapshots could be framed or pocketed.

Intellectual and artistic traditions are rarely limited to a single "culture," if by this term we mean a shared practical and symbolic world. This is especially the case in societies where writing or other techniques for the preservation of knowledge emerge. In such instances a specialized body of knowledge can affect a variety of social settings in various ways, but with the potential of imbuing each setting with shared styles of expression or social organization. If the filmlike progressions of illustrated stories demonstrate the relationship between words and pictures in the European tradition, then what configuration of sight and sound was disturbed when pictures of people began to dance over the walls of the sultan of Morocco's palace?

The sultan possessed portraits of his ancestors, and European arts such as easel painting were known, if not practiced, in Morocco. Yet people outside the palace knew important persons by their names or legends, not their faces.[8] Unlike Europeans, Moroccans did not carve busts of their saints and heroes in stone, nor did they paint images of objects on canvas. This pictorial reticence is not simply the proof of the Muslim imperative of iconoclasm. Rather, it expresses an aesthetic and ethical understanding of the relationship between divine creation on the one hand and humanity and its innovations on the other. This understanding was certainly linked to interpretations of the law, yet this same law was conceived differently in, for example, Persia and India; indeed, in earlier eras people were standard subjects of secular art in the Middle East.[9]

In pre-Protectorate and much current Moroccan design, beauty and meaning are said to spring not from practices of disinterested contemplation but from the object's relationship to space, from the harmonious play of light and shadow. Austere exteriors of buildings often hide opulent interiors, much as the flowing robes of urban women once masked elaborate undergarments and their savant use of jewelry, which they displayed indoors.

Contrasts between black, white, and color inform the aesthetic arrangements of light and shadow, silence and sound—in short, presence and absence. And, while presence is inhabited by color, pattern, and words, people cast their shadows on emptiness.

In the Moroccan context, art is not distinguished from design or architecture. Ibn Khaldun, for example, distinguishes between two main categories of human activity, *ʿulūm* and *ṣinā ʿa ʿulūm*, or "sciences," deal with the abstract intellectual disciplines of philoso-

phy, mathematics, science, and religious sciences. *Ṣinā ᶜa*, or "crafts" (from the root *s-n-'*, "to make"), include architecture, agriculture, music, medicine, and all other manner of activities. *Finn*, or "art," simply means the method of perfecting a craft. Artistic practices are learned mimetically, through imitating and then assisting a master.[10] Any activity can be accomplished artfully. Today *finn* has also come to mean "art" in the European sense.

Aesthetic forms in Morocco have always changed over time in response both to changing local tastes and to influences from far-off places.[11] Persian or Portuguese motifs appear in Moroccan embroidery.[12] In Fes fashions for clothing, slippers (*blāgi*), and jewelry formerly followed a two-year cycle based on the liturgical calendar. Fasi ladies from well-to-do families used this calendar to decide when to send their silver jewelry to be melted and recast in the latest styles.[13] Innovation (*bidᶜa*) was controlled but not arrested by religious interpretations of holy law and social regulations effected by a guild system in the cities. Patterns of power always manifest themselves in aesthetic forms, but this relation is perhaps clearest in monarchical systems. In Morocco each new dynasty reworked existing aesthetic forms in unique ways; indeed, artistic periods are dated according to dynasties. Powerful rulers sought to awe their followers, their rivals, and posterity by building magnificent mosques, palaces, and schools (*medāris*). These forms both symbolized might and structured social life.

French rule and movie houses alone did not transform Morocco's fashion and art, but these influences brought new ways of inducing and comprehending change that came to alter the relationship between different types of activities. People's faces and memories, their neighborhoods and notions of public life, were slowly yet powerfully reframed with reference to changing constellations of aesthetics, ethics, and science. When the limits of the visible push beyond habitual frames, individuals' senses of their bodies, their identities, and their place in the universe are transformed. Mass images have been crucial to modern change. To take part in the world of modern sight, one needs only to see; yet to master the production of images requires familiarity with the rationality that sets up frames of sight. In Morocco, European conventions of representation could not be disconnected from other aspects of Protectorate power and new modes of economic and social

organization that accompanied it. New ways of seeing elicited novel relationships of figure and ground, the individual and the universe.

Some Arabic-speaking regions had become acquainted with modern European images and ways of knowing before the twentieth century. Indeed, leaders like Mohammed Ali in Egypt adopted and adapted some European practices in the hope of countering European power.[14] Art forms of European origin, such as the theater and the novel, played a role in the *nahḍa*, the Middle Eastern "Renaissance."[15] Although Moroccan sultans and traders took an interest in these developments, locally they had little impact. The nineteenth century was a period of internal unrest in Morocco. Moroccan leaders were preoccupied with Europe's expanding power—especially after 1830, when the French took over Algeria—but, disregarding some movements for *tanzimat*-style reform under the leadership of the Sultan Moulay Hassan, the Moroccan *Maxen* (government) adopted a generally isolationist stance.[16]

Despite official reticence with respect to Europe, during the nineteenth century Moroccans became accustomed to drinking tea from teapots forged in Manchester. Tea drinking spread from urban, trading milieus to become an integral part of hospitality throughout North Africa. And in 1894, while urban Moroccans were adding fresh mint leaves to their Asian tea in English pots, the death of the Sultan Moulay Hassan brought the fourteen-year-old Moulay Abdelaziz to the throne.

Although the sobriety of Morocco's whitewashed, unadorned walls impressed visiting Europeans, the new sultan was criticized for his interest in the new and exotic. His palace was full of phonographs, cameras, caged animals, and fireworks; indeed, some observers speculated that his advisers encouraged his taste for new gadgets to divert his attention from state affairs. Be that as it may, Abdelaziz's problems were more historically rooted and more complex than such criticisms suggest: Morocco was poorly positioned to ward off colonialist ambitions, and fighting between elite factions within the kingdom reflected varied alliances with European powers. When the Protectorate was declared in 1912, a new order was proclaimed that promised to shelve both internal divisions and the fancies of decadent rulers.[17]

Louis Hubert Gonsalve Lyautey, the first resident general of Morocco, was instrumental in establishing this new order. Displeased

with the petit bourgeois spirit that characterized Algeria's colonization, Lyautey aimed to preserve what he saw as typically Moroccan principles of social hierarchy and to harmonize these principles with modern knowledge. From the start of the Protectorate, cities, education, law, and government were all conceived according to a two-tiered model. New French cities were built alongside existing cities (*mūdūn*), and traditional education and the Arabic "free schools" of the independence movement developed alongside French institutions of learning. Most important, pre-Protectorate legal systems—as well as the government, the *Maxen*, and the ruling Alawite dynasty—were left intact, although their decisions were always subject to the control of the colonial administration.

The social and spatial divisions drawn by administrators were not always well integrated with the practices of "unruly" Moroccans and the poor Europeans who migrated to Morocco from around the Mediterranean. Especially in the burgeoning city of Casablanca, people and things came together in unpredictable ways. Streets filled with motorcars, and workers moved from the fields into new factories. Casablanca grew with noisy spontaneity, a witty rebuttal to Lyautey's plan for a harmonious separation of social groups.[18] Clocks, factories, movies, and European ladies in scant summer dresses became common sights in Casablancan streets. New ways of arranging the visible became part of daily life at the same time that styles of talking about pictures and social life began to echo discourses then current in Europe.

In pre-Protectorate Morocco no public buildings were traditionally set up for performance arts. Stories were told at home, among friends, or in public plazas. There were scholars, but no theater critics to claim legitimate knowledge in analyzing the dramatic arts.[19] When forms like the theater and the cinema arrived in Morocco, intellectual and aesthetic debates followed in their wake. Easel painting, sculpture, artistic debates, articles about movie stars in popular magazines—all arrived in Casablanca at once. Many ideas about the strategies of the European cultural industries prove of little help in understanding new uses of images in Morocco. In Europe critics often used the early cinema as evidence to "demonstrate" the demise of bourgeois culture and the propagation of mass culture; in Morocco there was no analogous class and cultural configuration. Yet intellectual discourses were often adopted in their "imported" forms, and these forms influenced how people conceived of their own practices. At the same time, issues

of colonialism came to preoccupy intellectuals both in the colonies and in France itself.

As people in Morocco became involved in increasingly global discourses of art and politics, new demands for painting, cinema, and literature adapted to "Moroccan imaginations" began to emerge.[20] Local claims for self-representation included European models of knowledge and protest imported by the elite, who also referred to the Arab East, the Mashrek, where the problems posed by these new types of knowledge had already been addressed.[21] In the 1930s young militants in favor of independence adopted Western-style theater as one means of expressing their views.[22] New social categories, like those of the artist, the novelist, and even the schoolteacher, came into existence. At the same time, orientalist conventions were given new forms with the dissemination of movies, magazines, and books from Europe. Stereotyped pictures of Arabs were now observed by the people they were supposed to represent as well as by *colons* whose position made them into bodily representatives of the European.[23] Criticisms of orientalism are common in recent scholarship, yet the problem of establishing "real" pictures of Arab cultures remains. Indeed, more attention needs to be given to demands for images deemed authentic. Documentary films, news photographs, and texts encouraging progress all participated in a discourse of social reform that transformed ways of discussing pictures throughout the world.

Louis Lumière's crew shot the first film footage of Morocco in 1895. The resulting film, *Le chevrier marocain*, was to be part of a series of films made to familiarize French audiences with distant places. Confident that he could broaden the outlook of the average Frenchman, Lumière framed his efforts with pronouncements about science and realism.[24] Education would be made pleasurable and exciting thanks to the nearly immediate contact with distant places and peoples. "The cinema takes us to Japan, to Canada, to Chile, to the North Pole, to the Cape of Good Hope; . . . it offers images *only eight hours old.*"[25] While metropolitan audiences were the first to view these distant places, those in the colonies soon took their place before the silver screen. This journalistic concern with documentary and speedy viewing brought European audiences into seemingly direct contact with parts of the world that many of their leaders hoped to dominate. A taxonomy of geographic and physical characteristics resulted from these efforts, which—like academic and particularly ethnographic

studies of the period—bear witness to a certain naïveté in their confident realism. Then as now, progressive publications peddled the notion that a "realistic" presentation of social problems would somehow cure these ills and inevitably enlighten people. Those who protested the overt deprecation of the colonized often looked to science, education, and realism as means of escaping the prejudice of fantasy. The fanciful stories and commercial aims of Egyptian films and American melodramas were, and continue to be, berated by those who consider science, progress, and reform as inextricably joined.

It is significant that both progressive critics and the French government saw the development of the Egyptian cinema and its popularity in Morocco as a major source of grief, although for different reasons. After World War II the French authorities realized that the only films in Arabic reaching Moroccan audiences were coming from Egypt. The Centre Cinématographique Marocain (CCM) was created in 1947 to encourage the development of a Moroccan national cinema that could be controlled by the Protectorate. This policy echoed those developed by Lyautey decades earlier to encourage a local press to offset the influence of newspapers published in the Spanish-controlled north.[26] At the beginning of the century French journalists were quickly deported if their messages did not conform to the official outlook. Similarly, those who sought to use film to criticize the exploitation of women or workers could hardly hope to relay any nationalist slogans through a Protectorate institution. Still, the realists hoped at least to avoid the sentimentality of popular Egyptian films.

The most important issue for those in power was the creation not of art but of audiences. Some popular forms of entertainment, like the music hall and popular theater, could include local or idiosyncratic themes, but the cinema relied on large audiences and repeatable experiences. In Morocco audiences of all origins could be exposed to the same images and stereotypes current in Europe.[27] National news items and drama alike could be uniformly diffused in this way. Commercial success depended on attracting crowds and developing themes with wide appeal. Audiences and publicity agencies came into being all at once, giving birth simultaneously to stars whose personae were projected on screens, newspapers, and city walls. Stars' and politicians' images sprang out of movies and into daily life to incite new social practices, altering clothing styles, slang, and ideas about relations between men and women. Practices previously associated with

bohemian outsiders and manners invented by idiosyncratic stars could be quickly adopted by eager movie fans. New combinations of commerce and sentimentality became possible as people of diverse backgrounds and mother tongues were immersed in a suddenly similar world of visual and literary references.

These changes affected all aspects of life in Morocco during the Protectorate, and since independence the debate about national art, cinema, and television has remained lively. Would new forms of power be expressed "realistically," following the contours of modern truth, or would the mass media perpetrate new kinds of delightful fantasy, mimicking the Egyptian movies that, according to most progressive intellectuals, perverted the masses? Two general styles of perceiving and acting out relationships among drama, images, and ideas of society are suggested if we think of this contrast in terms of the two modes of Muslim piety in Morocco: Salafite reformism and Sufi brotherhoods.

Salafite Islam animated many of those in the Moroccan movement for national independence. Different currents of reformist ideas were associated with the Wahhabites of eighteenth-century Arabia and writers like Egypt's Mohammed Abduh. In Morocco, as in neighboring Algeria, nationalists reacted against both the colonial power and popular religious practices in the hope of encouraging a more sober, text-oriented style of religious expression. Those influenced by Salafite ideas used "the emphasis on divine unity . . . as the basis of a bitter critique of Sufi beliefs and practices. The reformers denounced the veneration of saints and beliefs in miracles and attempted to use rational arguments to demystify rural Sufism."[28]

Sufism was particularly strong in Morocco, where it provided mystical alternatives to the orthodoxy of the *ʿulamā* (religious scholars, notables) and laid the basis for a complex system of tribal alliances that was the main mode of political organization before the accession of the Alawite dynasty in the sixteenth century. Indeed, the present king himself is a *šrīf*. His family, like other saintly families, is esteemed for its links with dead holy men and ultimately with Mohammed; many people look to saints and their descendants (*šurfā*) for spiritual and practical guidance. Today Sufi brotherhoods (*zawāyya*) remain models for group association even though their explicit power has waned. They provide networks of solidarity and continue to shape religious feeling through often spectacular rituals.

The distinction between those who venerate saints and the Salafites is not absolute in daily practice. For this reason one might see the contest between Maraboutism (saint worship) and reformist currents of Islam as a metaphor, but not a taxonomical guide, for understanding the complex intertwining of thought and aesthetic expression in contemporary Morocco. While the Salafites point toward austere rationalism and iconoclasm, saints serve as intermediaries between the self and God. While the words of the Koran and the Sunna are the main signposts for reformers, music, dance, and ecstatic states mark the rituals of brotherhoods like the Aissawa, the Tijanniya, and the Hamadsha.[29] Magic, like mysticism, is opposed by reformers.[30] How could they sanction using Koranic verses as mere talismans for such purposes as harming a neighbor, winning back a husband's affection, or driving off the *znūn* (genies)?

As mentioned above, General Joseph Gallieni hoped that the magical aspect of motion pictures would serve his designs, but magical images are powerfully ambiguous.[31] And while we might designate sorcerers as beyond the pale of usual human concerns, their power in Moroccan society cannot be ignored. In contrast, the Salafite viewpoint and secular intellectualism, both inherently rational, eschew ambiguity in favor of verbal debate and legal consensus. Words might be veiled, but ideally they have single meanings. Dichotomies between reason and fancy, austerity and baroque display, seemed at first to be problems that could be eliminated by the spread of literacy and related notions of piety. We must keep in mind that discourses of education, progress, and power available in Morocco also depended for their diffusion on the increasingly refined magic of internationally or nationally produced mass images. Similarly, scholars have suggested that those who fought for national independence—from Abdelkrim, who led the early resistance to the Spanish in the north, to the bourgeois leaders of the *Istiqlal* (independence movement) and the socialist leader Ben Barka—had to adopt the relational styles of the *zawiyya* to be credible to their followers.[32]

The Protectorate had laid the groundwork for new, "rational" arrangements of the visible. Yet these new visions were often understood in terms of social relations that were not in perfect synchrony with the plans of administrators or the modern boulevards of Casablanca. The future seemed to belong to leaders who could portray their modern schemes in charismatic or magical forms, combining existing local

motifs with international ones. After independence in 1956, power was no longer made palpable in the French symbol, Marianne;[33] nevertheless, the ways of representing power introduced by French administrators and movie magazines would live on.

With the return of King Mohammed V and the monarchy's resumption of effective power in 1956, new traditions developed for representing the relationship between royal persons, now photographically embalmed, and the people. The king's image was given a new role as the entire fabric of vision became ever more enmeshed in the routinized creation of charisma. The quality of *baraka* (grace) had always been attributed to saints, wise men, and sultans. Like the qualities of *ʔdāb*, correct and graceful comportment, *baraka* is perceived immediately. One can neither claim it nor sense how one recognizes it; it simply is. With the advent of the camera, *baraka* was represented with increasing frequency through photographs and film.

Today photographs of the king are mandatory in public places. In homes, too, people often display pictures of authority figures: the king, fathers, sons. Youths often sleep in bedrooms filled with the dreamlike images of Bob Marley or Aouwaïta, the Moroccan track star. In stores one finds pinups, travel posters, and advertisements for Egyptian films, all ranged alongside photographs of the king. Koranic verses are taped over old advertisements for car oil, and soccer heroes take their place next to Bruce Lee or Sylvester Stallone. This seamless wallpaper of posters, postcards, and photographs fails to divide experience in terms of Lyautey's division of Moroccan and European. Television brings the public world into the heart of the home in the form of a moving, framed picture.

Studying how these images participate in creating contemporary Casablanca may be likened to deconstructing the movies as an experience, a form of knowledge, and a technique. As we watch a film, a shadowy linking of persons and objects builds up narratives that we can understand, at least if we are familiar with the character types and the script's formulas. As audiences we want to know how stories end; as citizens or subjects we wonder about how these stories influence us to accept opinions or purchase products. We think less often about what technical rationale underlies the smooth projection of a film, or how images give rhythm to our lives, or how they help to arrange space and create group sentiment. To study mass images is to consider each

of these matters by pondering the meaning of places these pictures cannot or should not go. There are no photographs in mosques, nor are there movie screens in offices, yet mass-produced images clog our streets, pervade our conversations, and clothe our bodies. The ingenuity of these pictures is at once diffuse and directed, centered in specific strategies of power, and constantly being recomposed through extensive though minuscule changes in the everyday disciplines of self and society.

The outline of the present project was first traced in Paris in 1983 when I began a historical study of Moroccan cinema and television. In 1987 and 1988 I traveled regularly between Paris and Morocco to conduct in-depth interviews with those who create and select images for television, movies, and the press. At the same time I began to examine how people of diverse backgrounds watch, talk about, and make images. Originally I planned to concentrate on those groups who depend most on mass images and information for gaining knowledge: that is, not the elite, who can acquire firsthand information about national or local issues, but rather those "middling" people whose cultural and economic capital allows them the broadest possible access to mass imagery but who are less likely to have personal connections to powerful figures. This approach had the advantage of avoiding preconceived notions of social, family, or group status. However, the actual research proved more complex than I had envisioned. By the time I settled in Casablanca in the fall of 1988, it was clear that my research would be about the limits of images in Casablanca and the limits of my own images of society drawn from American and European scholarship. How could I distinguish between "European" and "Moroccan" discourses about sight and society in a place where such talk has developed in a context of constant interrelation?

Paradoxically, the modern situation—with its proliferating media, international trade, mobile populations, and regional and global conflicts—intensifies exchanges between countries and regions while defining the nation-state as the legitimate seat of power and the primary source of identity. Some anthropologists have examined the effects of the world economy on local life and beliefs, often presenting a scenario in which worldviews confront each other, with the weaker party being transformed by the stronger. Often symbolic worlds and whispered stories are seen as potential sources of resistance to external powers. Here I suggest that, although powerful differences in worldviews must be considered, we can understand our modern antinomies only if we

remember that they are shared, even though such sharing may engender or deepen inequities. This consideration suggests that we must reexamine both the role of the state and holistic notions of culture. Indeed, we must reconsider how state or regional formations promote specific ideas of culture and how academic approaches to the study of society incorporate—or fail to incorporate—the conceptions of the people themselves.

Communications specialists generally adopt European and American research methods to conduct studies throughout the world. In such studies the notion of social class, for instance, is often seen as given. The nuclear family grouped around the television is proposed as the norm, and the head of the household, usually the father, offers his profession as a sign of his family's sociological status. But how do we determine who in a social group, and especially in a family, should be considered the source of economic and cultural capital? The nuclear family is becoming increasingly prevalent in Morocco, yet the extended family remains important. Still, compared to families in American and European societies studied by media analysts, in Morocco even nuclear families are often quite large. In nearly all of the settings I have come to know in Morocco, people of varied backgrounds gather to discuss images on television and in magazines. In a region with very high unemployment, non-work-related identities are often more important than those related to professional activities. Maids and other servants are common in households that are far from well-off by American and European standards, and these servants are intimately involved in the lives of family members. Widely diverse economic and cultural backgrounds can exist within a single family: it is not uncommon for a university professor or the president of a large company to have an illiterate mother. Linguistic competencies also vary within groups or even in a single individual in different situations. My research did not refute assumptions that social class affects how people view and relate to images, but my findings did inflect those assumptions by considering the variety of social situations in which images participate in daily life and the perpetual reinvention of society.[34]

The people I write about give much importance to determining social status, but their ways of according status differ. Identification with neighborhoods is often used to indicate social position. I met with people in the "popular" (working-class) quarters of Aïn Chok and Derb Kebir, in the elite areas of Anfa and Polo, and in the changing neighborhood of the Maarif. Many of my most intriguing observations

were made in public areas like the Arab League Park and the wide boulevards of the city. I spoke with people of all ages, individually, with groups of friends, or at home with their families. When I generalize about "Casablancans" or "youths" or groups, I draw on countless encounters with people in Casablanca and throughout Morocco. These generalizations are based on the frequency with which I heard or observed certain discourses or practices. I do not pretend that they are representative in a statistical sense, for my purpose is not to reveal an average or to discover a single system of "Moroccan" representation. The limits of the possible, the lineaments of the seen, the contours of meaning—these are not the same for all Casablancans, let alone all Moroccans. However, in my search for the frameworks of social distinction, I was perhaps most astonished at how often people from different areas of the city, and even different nations, brought up similar issues. Their positions with respect to the matters in question differed widely, but the patterns and themes they evoked were strikingly consistent. The rhythms of modern technique certainly had something to do with these regularities.

In this study I have tried to follow the constructivist path evoked by Roland Barthes in his study of photography. This study, he remarks, has

> nothing to do with a corpus, just some bodies. In this debate, after all quite conventional between subjectivity and science, I came upon this bizarre idea: why wouldn't there be, in a way, a new science through the object? A "mathesis singularis" (and no longer universalis)? I accepted therefore to take on as mediator all of Photography: I would try to formulate, starting from some personal movements, the fundamental trait, the universal without which there would be no Photography.[35]

In Casablanca I could perceive no single fundamental trait, but certain motifs appeared regularly in images, in texts, on streets, and in people's words. Once I identified these motifs, I pursued each through questioning and observation. I adopted what I call a "strong placement" of myself in an effort to follow these pictures rather than others. By this I mean that I deliberately focused on specific images that, without providing a key to the entire society, appeared to offer ways of comprehending apparently inexplicable practices. By saying that my position as a researcher was "strong," I likewise seek to underline the fact that the images that I saw and the discourses that I hear were often

previously known to myself and the people I met in Casablanca. This meant that my own position required taking stands and expressing preferences concerning these shared references. From the beginning I found the process of debating, disagreeing, and learning new approaches to already known problems were central to my research: I was not merely soaking up local culture. Throughout this project I constantly restated and reworked my chosen subjects in interactions with others. The object of the study, my own image, and the tone of my relationships with many people were touched by this initial framing of purpose. Amid the movement of Casablancan life, I used these chosen images to focus my gaze and to determine the significance of what I might witness. The different frames given to specific images often coincided with limits of daily discourse or practice.

As you read, you will certainly notice that I dwell most on unusual or problematic practices or events. Because meaning and action are founded in difference and choice, the range of possible practices and imaginations is often best exemplified by the peculiar, the dangerous, the new and strange.[36] For native Casablancans and foreigners alike, the familiar and the strange continually blend, entwine, diverge, and metamorphose. Instead of showing itself all at once, strangeness gradually entered this study as I tried to understand what remained hidden behind all of the ostentation of modern Casablanca. Part of the unseen was unseeable, like the logic behind the regular flow of people in the street. Other obscure objects appeared unthreatening at first but inspired fear or uncertainty on closer examination. The strangest stories I heard had little to do with ideas of the supernatural or the alien. The dangerous zones were not those places haunted by genies (*znūn*), who—like all sensible beings—flock to water. Instead, people complained of being seized as they entered the stairwells of modern office buildings, of being taken forcibly to police stations, of being accosted as they walked to school. That which is not visible usually cannot be directly named. Outcasts or children may speak of unseeable objects or persons, but mature and right-thinking members of societies tend to recognize only the legitimate invisibles, whether genies or quarks. Only in exceptional situations do the norms of visibility become a matter of intense debate.[37] That which is hidden is not simply what is strange to outsiders. The unseeable is often strangeness itself, and it can embody the inadmissible or unexplained in oneself or in relationships, including those between nations or social groups.

Visions appear in nightmares or crystallize in delightful fantasies. Seeing is not always believing, but by arranging what is visible, people attempt to convince others that some visions are true, others mere chimeras. Even "natural" practices—gestures of friendship or respect, manners of walking, judgments on neighbors' new clothes—can suggest how groups are formed, see themselves, and wish to be seen. Why cling to certain objects as significant cultural traits while throwing others on the scrap heap? This question is posed daily for Casablancans and anthropologists alike.

What I have called a "strong placement" of the researcher assumes that anthropology is a reflexive activity, but one that cannot today be presumed to be based on an "ethnographic" experience of utter difference (in which the researcher yet seeks some universal human community). Neither the process of research nor the object of study can be represented as a separate theater with its own cultural script. Complicities and conflicts between ethnographers and those whose lives and societies they try to describe take place on stages that are partially shared. The fact that an ethnographer or an informant may be viewed as a representative of one or another group is important, but we cannot accept such simple equations as the basis of ethnographic study itself. In this book I seek to explore ways of taking into account variable identities and their relationships to knowledge. Only by distinguishing these variations and their relative significance can we begin to discover which "concrete universals" bear the most weight. Only once we determine these universals can we begin to comprehend the subtle strategies of modern powers.

Part of what determines one's role in international exchange is the language one uses. Casablancans generally speak Moroccan Arabic, and Arabic is the main language taught in public schools. Knowledge of French and other European languages has become more widespread since the end of the Protectorate and the expansion of public education. Berbers are increasingly bilingual but continue to speak their own languages: Rifian in the north; Tamazight in the Middle Atlas, Central High Atlas, and Sahara; and Tashelhit in the High and Ante-Atlas.[38] Television and movies have familiarized many people with other dialects of Arabic.

The existence of a single creed has had important effects on how images operate in Morocco. Islam's central text, the Koran, does not offer easy or unique solutions, as indicated by the many contrasting