3.6.0 A translation of representation

It has been highlighted above that the Musée du Quai Branly project, and its first realization at the Musée du Louvre, is communicating a message of acknowledgement and consideration directed to the international community and particularly to the Developing World. It has also been hinted this message could be for the people of France. After all Jacques Chirac declared: "[...] this museum will be the instrument for a renewed citizenship." In what follows, an attempt will be made to explore the role of the museum - in this case a national ethnographic museum - as an authority, since it stands both as a voice of the state and as a public space, for meaning-making. It is also an opportunity to reveal a possible link between a museographical project and its political impact in terms of national identity. Concerning this latter, we will focus on the burning debates around social cohesion and cultural diversity in France, terms used by the discourse surrounding the museum project.

3.6.1 National identity, national museum and representation: from the object to the subject

The social function of museum's communication

Jean Davallon's article states the following question, "Is the museum really a medium?" It seems that the answer depends on which definition of the medium is considered. Jean Davallon opposes a "techno-scientific" definition which encompasses a technological medium conceived as a technology of communication of information and which supposes an economic development of this technology via industrial structures.

Although the exhibition can be considered as the museums' technology of communication, Jean Davallon considers that there are some limitations: the exhibition medium is not part of industries of communication based on the development of a broadcasting network, though there may be a communication set up between objects and knowledge, and visitors. Moreover if museums embrace an economic logic this does not necessarily reach an industrial production; and the profit is more symbolic than economic. This is why Jean Davallon investigates the medium through its symbolic operation. In this case the medium is not seen as a "machine" which would link individuals to a service of information broadcasting but rather as a "social device." For the medium is understood as a "social relation," in a social

131 See: Ashley, "State Authority and the Public Sphere: Ideas on the Changing Role of the Museum as a Canadian Social Institution."

132 Davallon, "Le musée est-il vraiment un média?" 99-124.
space where social relations are initiated, where actors are negotiating their positions and roles and where social discourses are created. "It is this capacity to organise a social life that makes the symbolic operation of the medium. It is from this perspective that one should think its societal functioning." This point of view is essential to understand the societal impact of both the creation and communication of a museum dedicated to the arts and civilisations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas as well as the use of the exhibition at the Pavillon des Sessions to create a new social discourse around the concepts of difference and absence of difference, around concepts of equality of cultures and citizenship.

**Meaning making and classification**

It may be questioned why, and through which process, these cultural objects collected during colonial times and displayed in museums dedicated to the study of 'the Other' enter, or re-enter, the museum world under a new status: that of a proof of acknowledgement and consideration and as evidence of the universality of Art. Nevertheless, for Jean Davallon, it would be a mistake to approach the relation of communication between social actors and museum objects via the objects' essence. As a matter of fact, Jean Davallon highlights the fact that these objects became museum objects by a recognised authority, and "that is why the decision which enunciates their new status always possesses the form of a public act." The museum objects which he calls "musealia" are as much things, "physical realities", as "beings of language," for they are defined and presented in a certain way, which is in turn defined by social conventions and therefore always underlies the classification system. For the public to actually constitute a 'public,' legitimising the objects as museum objects, requires a discourse which deals with the "institutional status" of the objects and which gives them a sense through their presentations. Jean Davallon calls this a "patrimonialisation" or a placing into heritage. Thus, the discourse created around the cultural objects exhibited at the Musée du Louvre, essentialises the objects as Art, by imposing an official reading. It operates a transfer of the philosophical approach of an essence of man, present in the declaration of human rights to cultural objects: "So that the masterpieces of the whole world are born free and equal,"

133 Davallon, "Le musée est-il vraiment un média?,” 103. "C'est cette capacité d'organiser de la vie sociale qui fait l'opérativité symbolique des médias; c'est à partir d'elle qu'il convient de penser son fonctionnement sociétal."

134 Ibid, 104.

135 Ibid, 104
declared Jacques Kerchache, the curator of the Louvre exhibition.\textsuperscript{136} (See: Appendices 1 & 2, 63-64)

**From the object to the subject**

"What we see and do not see in art museums - and on what terms and by whose authority we do or do not see it - is closely linked to larger questions about who constitutes the community and who defines its identity."\textsuperscript{137} [Carol Duncan]

For Elise Dubuc, this assertion applies in reality to all museum institutions.\textsuperscript{138} She investigates the emergence of the subject, the people's voices in a museum world dedicated to objects, at a time when "the management of despoiled identities" has called for a questioning of the museums' practices.\textsuperscript{139} Elise Dubuc reviews four ways of considering, and by consequence presenting, museum objects: "objects of curiosity," "specimens," "cultural artefacts," and "works of art".\textsuperscript{140} These four methods belong to the history of anthropology and echo its development, and according to her, these four ways of looking at and thinking about museum objects are outdated at a time when representatives of cultures open their own museums and give their own readings of objects. Discussing the "piece of art" representation, she considers that the debate between the two academic disciplines of art history and anthropology reveal a paralyzed debate. "Reflex comes more easily than reflection" since it does not acknowledge that the flaws of the formalist presentation mirror those of the contextualizing presentation.\textsuperscript{141} Many other different ways of presenting cultural objects have been thought of and experienced in the museum world.\textsuperscript{142}

\textsuperscript{136} kerchache, "Pour que les chefs-d'œuvre du monde entier naissent libres et égaux."


\textsuperscript{138} Dubuc, "Entre l'art et l'autre, l'émergence du sujet," 39.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid, 40.

\textsuperscript{140} Ibid, 43.

\textsuperscript{141} Dubuc, "Entre l'art et l'autre, l'émergence du sujet," 45.

\textsuperscript{142} The reader is invited to look at the work done by the MEN, Musée d'Ethnographie de Neuchâtel, Switzerland, and especially the exhibition catalogue, *Le musée cannibal*, which is a reflection on museum practices, and displays, in that case, on the display of ethnographic cultural objects.
"I am at the Louvre"\textsuperscript{143}

Nélia Dias, in an essay entitled "A Spot at the Louvre", analyses how the exhibition at the Pavillon des Sessions was communicated by posters showing a photograph of a cultural object chosen to be displayed at the Pavillon des Sessions with written underneath: "I am at the Louvre."\textsuperscript{144} She points out that it is of human nature and thus at risk in museum practices that a will or human traits are attributed to objects. As a consequence, she underlines the two possible readings of the first person of the personal pronoun in the assertion: "I am at the Louvre". The cultural objects endowed with speech confuse genres between the object and the culture it represents and therefore the people or the creator that gave birth to the object, and jams the attribution of intentionality. Who actually says "I am at the Louvre," and whose

\textsuperscript{143} Advertisement posters "Je suis au Louvre."

\textsuperscript{144} Dias, "Une place au Louvre," 15-30.
intention is it to be at the Louvre? In addition, the objects chosen for the advertisement campaign all had some human attributes which reinforces the emergence of a subject from the object. Nélia Dias quoting Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett wrote:

"The objects thus become [...] "the proxies for the persons," the museum found with the objects what the society does not manage with the people associated with the objects." [...] The role of the objects as proxies constitutes, following Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, one of the reasons why museums are political minefields. In this process of replacing some persons by some objects and of moving the intentionality of the agent [...] the object becomes "much more than a simple relay in the social relation network, it is an actor itself."145 [Nélia Dias]

This analysis sheds a particular light on the nature of the museum project within the French context, which is not exempt of cultural and identity claims. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the emergence of a subject (at least a virtual subject), is counter-balanced by an official discourse/display on the artistic value of these cultural objects, erasing, as argued in this thesis, the cultural identity of the objects and their potential to be different communities' voices. As a consequence, a further understanding of how French national cohesion is understood would be helpful to gain a better grasp of some of the argued contradictions of the museum project.

3.6.2 French current debate, an epistemological framework: from the subject to the object

Stéphane Martin, Director of the Musée du Quai Branly, pronounced what follows at the College de France during a day of information about the museum project, 27 June 2001:

"When a Canadian institution gives back its fair place to the Inuit's civilizations of Canada or an Australian museum to the Aborigines civilizations in Australia, it deals with a major act of domestic policy, in which the scientific objectivity, the scientist's coldness or the aesthete's desire are something eventually subalter in regards to urgent necessities of national coherence and legibility.

We are, I think – but this is another debate- but I think that we are one of the rare countries, and this is a fantastic chance for France [...] to conceive of

145 Ibid, 21. "Les objets deviennent ainsi [...] "des procureurs (proxies) pour les personnes", les musées instaurant avec les objets ce que la société ne parvient pas à réaliser avec le peuple associé à ces objets. Le rôle des objets comme procureurs constitue, selon, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, l'une des raisons pour lesquelles les musées sont des champs de bataille politique. Dans ce processus de remplacement des personnes par des objets et de déplacement de l'intentionnalité de l'agent [...], l'objet devient "beaucoup plus qu'un simple relais dans le réseau des relations sociales, il est un acteur lui-même."
culture, widened to the scientific field, as a good in itself and not only as an instrument of a superior good. *Culture is not simply an element of cohesion; it is also an object in itself to search for.* And it is true that our approach, I think, in the scientific realm as well as in the museological realm, is an approach that is meant to be objective, lucid, and not of passion, committed and politically significant in regards to some requirements of, for instance, national coherence.¹⁴⁶ [Stéphane Martin]

It is noteworthy to parallel this discourse, which supposes that culture exists independently of people, with that of the French President Jacques Chirac (See: 1.1.1 The Musée du Quai Branly's ambition, 8). For the uneasiness in tackling the issue of the representation and inclusion of 'the Other', denying the need for social cohesion through the acknowledgement of the diversity of cultures in France (a perspective which is considered at stake in the new museum project) is revealed through oscillating assertions. Contemporary France is facing the challenge of cultural diversity. The debate around multiculturalism and most recently around cultural diversity is, as it will be developed below, a difficult enterprise in a country where the French nation is built on a supposed cultural homogeneity and presented as an inheritor of the great civilisations, and also a producer of great art.

**About cultural diversity**

On 20 October 2005, France signed the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. In the UNESCO Convention, "Cultural diversity" is defined as followed:

"Cultural Diversity" refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies.

Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the culture heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through

¹⁴⁶ Martin, "journée d'information du mercredi 27 juin 2001.” "Lorsqu'une institution canadienne redonne sa juste place aux civilisations Inuits du Canada ou un musée australien aux civilisations aborigènes en Australie, il s'agit de faire un acte majeur de politique intérieure, dans lequel l'objectivité scientifique, la froideur du scientifique ou le désir de l'esthètes sont quelque chose de finalement subalterne par rapport à des nécessités urgentes de cohérence et de lisibilité nationales."Nous sommes, je pense – enfin c'est un autre débat- mais je pense que nous sommes un des rares pays, et c'est une chance formidable pour la France...nous sommes un des rares pays à concevoir la culture, élargie au champ scientifique, comme un bien en soi et non pas simplement comme l'instrument d'un bien supérieur. La culture n'est simplement un élément de cohésion, c'est aussi un objet en soi à rechercher. Et c'est vrai que notre approche, je pense, aussi bien dans le domaine scientifique que dans le domaine museologique, est une approche qui se veut objective, lucide, et non pas passionnelle, engagée et politiquement significative par rapport à des exigences, par exemple, de cohérence nationale.”
The term of 'multiculturalism' has long seemed to be ideologically rooted in a particular conception of a 'living together' where differences are institutionalised. In France, "multiculturalism" has long been discussed in opposition to the French notion of 'melting pot' or 'acculturation,' where differences are supposed to disappear in favour of a common French identity. Today, a looser term, that of 'cultural diversity', which is less historically loaded, appears as the French "acculturation" principle deem to deny cultural expressions to French citizens at a time when "one in every ten persons in the developed regions is a migrant." To step further aside from the assumed consequences of a multiculturalist society, the "cultural diversity" approach is considered to lead to interculturalism which supposes not only the celebration of cultural differences but their meeting and exchange allowing for a better integration. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that this debate is very recent in France for, as Gaëlle Mogentalle underlined it, although the notion of "dialogue of cultures" appeared in the sixties, the French Ministry of Foreign affairs, then managing the budget for cultural relations outside France, only adopted the new objective of "dialogue of cultures" in 1979. This reluctance can be understood, as France dedicated part of the budget for Foreign Affairs to the exportation of French culture: a project far from for allowing a cultural dialogue, as emphasised by Gaëlle Mogentalle's thesis.

**National identity, political situation and current debates in France: "manifesto of the indigenous of the Republic,"**

France's difficulties to deal with its colonial past and multicultural present are reflected in the recent legislative measures in the cultural realm and the manifold reactions that they triggered. The most recent legislative measure is the law of 23 February 2005 (acknowledgment of the Nation and national contribution to French repatriates) which in its paragraph 4 reads that "the university research programs grant to the history of the French presence overseas, in particular in North Africa, the place which it deserves." it also stipulates that the school curricula should acknowledge the "positive role" of the French presence overseas (and in particular in North Africa), as well as the sacrifices of the French Army in

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148 UNESCO, "What is cultural diversity?"

149 For a more in-depth analysis of the three terms of "multiculturalism", "cultural diversity" and "Interculturality", such as understood in the French context, see *Culture et Recherche* n°106-107. Articles by Dominique Piot-Morin, Claude Rouot and Pierre Mayol.

these territories.\textsuperscript{151} This controversial law came after a previous law, the law Taubira of 21 May 2001, which acknowledges the slave trade and slavery as a crime against humanity.\textsuperscript{152} Despite the fact that these legislative measures show extreme contradictions oscillating from a mortified attitude towards French history, which is deeply linked to slavery and colonialism, to a reactive not to say regressive French attitude declaring the "positive role" of colonialism; it has been argued that these particular interpretations of history should not become laws in a democratic country where historical research should be free. Moreover, history can be informed by so many different points of view that these two laws interpreting history only allow for a rigid, not to say denying, national grand narrative.\textsuperscript{153}

On 4 January 2006, Jacques Chirac, in order to "appease the minds," decided that the fourth paragraph on the "positive role" of colonialism would be rewritten.\textsuperscript{154} Meanwhile, a manifesto was published, the "Manifesto of the Indigenous of the Republic" in March 2005, and a march was organised on 8 May 2005 in Paris at the Square of the République.\textsuperscript{155} The reference to the indigenous of the Republic is reminiscent of the administrative status of Algeria under French rule when the country was considered French but not its autochthones, hence under the indigenous status. Consequently, this manifesto points out and denounces a stratified French society depending on ethnic origins and skin colours and entering into contradiction with the French idealised melting pot. It is argued that the contradiction between ideal and reality is performed at the Louvre exhibition, through the display technique and communication.

\textbf{French cultural exception: French cultural capital}

In order to better understand France recent engagement with the UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity and discourses, such as the museum Director Stéphane Martin's comment

\textsuperscript{151} Loi n° 2005-158 du 23 février 2005. "Les programmes de recherche universitaire accordent à l'histoire de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, la place qu'elle mérite. Les programmes scolaires reconnaissent en particulier le rôle positif de la présence française outre-mer, notamment en Afrique du Nord, et accordent à l'histoire et aux sacrifices des combattants de l'armée française issus de ces territoires la place éminente à laquelle ils ont droit."

\textsuperscript{152} Loi n°2001 – 434 du 23 mai 2001 tendant à la reconnaissance de la traite et de l'esclavage en tant que crime contre l'humanité."

\textsuperscript{153} See the petition signed by many French historians: "La pétition des historiens contre la loi du 23 février 2005."

\textsuperscript{154} \textit{Le Monde}, "Jacques Chirac se prononce pour la réécriture de l'article controversé sur la colonisation," 4 January 2006.

\textsuperscript{155} "Nous sommes les indigènes de la République," http://www.indigenes-republique.org/article.php3?id_article=2. See also Pétré Grenouilleau, "Les identités traumatiques."
Republican universalism is the principle at stake in the creation and perpetuation of the French nation-state. This principle was born in the aftermath of the 1789 French revolution and assumes that every human being can become a French citizen if such is his/her will. The French nation is therefore thought as a contract between the state and each individual. The quotation by Ernest Renan, "The nation is a plebiscite of everyday," is often referred to when describing the French nation. This point is of major importance for this thesis, since it allows an understanding of France's difficulty and resistance to think in terms of communities and a fortiori of community representatives.

According to Herman Lebovics, drawing upon the works by Gérard Noiriel and Eugen Weber, French republicanism supposes a national unity which equates to a cultural unity. "French republicanism interpreted the logic of the nation-state as requiring that political boundaries approximate cultural ones, or more exactly, that to share in the life of the nation one had to be part of the national culture," states Herman Lebovics so as to better show the French state involvement in the cultural life of its citizens, especially in "the areas of language and aesthetic." From this, one may deduce a traditional French intolerance towards expression of cultural differences as it is interpreted as a threat to what constitutes the foundation of the nation. The separation of church and state (laïcité) increases the difficulties to integrate cultural individuals/groups for which religion holds an important social status. As a matter of fact, the 'laic' state goes hand-in-hand with a strong dichotomy between private and public space; and personal beliefs are expected to be kept to the private sphere.

Consequently, the public sphere is, as previously mentioned, dominated by the diffusion of the national culture." In Herman Lebovics' theory, the French exception comes from the fact that France has always ensured the maintenance of a national culture that is at the foundation of the nation-state. Therefore, France has worked hard in presenting and imposing itself as the "cultural capital of Europe", not to say of the world. According to Herman Lebovics,

156 For more information see, Amselle, *Vers un multiculturelisme français*, 169-172.
157 Renan, *Qu'est-ce-qu'une nation?*, conférence donnée à la Sorbonne, 1882.
France has historically presented itself as the protector of the arts by bringing to the French capital art from Italy and Greece. Napoleon during his military conquests brought back twenty-five classical sculptures in Paris where a day celebration in honour of liberty, was organised, on July 27th of 1798. In front of the procession, a banner could read "Monuments of Antique Sculpture. Greece gave them up; Rome lost them; their fate has twice changed; it will not change again." Afterwards, "the art from each new shipment from Italy was put on display in the Louvre." Quoting Patricia Mainardi, Herman Lebovics offers an interesting insight in French universalism:

"[...] their history was used not only to justify their appropriation by France, but also to deepen the claim that France – not Italy, or any of the other major powers – was the cultural capital of Europe. By taking possession of the historically multilayered – culturally wrapped – art of the past, France validated its aesthetic-political universalism." [Herman Lebovics]

Later on in the sixties, the Mona Lisa, symbolically attached to the Louvre, was sent to an American museum as a political gesture by the French government to the USA to alleviate some political disagreements. André Malraux, the first Minister of Culture, escorted the Mona Lisa, hence used as a cultural capital by France, to reaffirm its status or social position: a position of artistic and cultural prestige.

From this perspective the political message surrounding the museum project and the museum's first realisation can be seen as a political tool to constantly (re)define 'the national identity/culture' boundaries.

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160 Ibid, 36-37.
161 Ibid, 36-37.
"To speak of 'man' and the 'human' is to run the risk of reducing contingent differences to a system of universal essences. Moreover, the authority arrogated by the humanist too often goes unquestioned. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty would point out: "In its own eyes, Western humanism is the love of humanity, but to others it is merely the custom and institution of a group of men, their password, and sometimes their battle cry." *(Humanisme et Terreur, 182).*

**4.7.0 Final words**

At the beginning of this paper the following questions were raised:

The main question is threefold: How is it possible to create a museum whose ambition is to "be an instrument for peace" and an evidence of the "equal dignities of cultures" by displaying ethnographic objects? These objects are the treasures of past collecting that took advantage of unequal power relations and which are evidence of a sensitive colonial time. So far, how does the Musée du Quai Branly project fulfil these ambitions? Does the museum challenge the representation of national identity at a time when the nation-state is challenged?

It is considered that the Musée du Quai Branly chose in its first realisation to display ethnographic objects acquired during the colonial period as art, hence erasing the historical, spiritual, social background of these objects. Since representing 'Them' is actually representing 'Us,' it can be deduced that this avoidance of a sensitive past may be in reality avoiding a social confrontation about what it is to be French today.

**The sound of silence**

Despite a discourse around cultural diversity, dialogue, mutual respect, the Musée du Quai Branly’s first realisation is full of silence; a silence imposed by the "emotional shock," a visitor is intended to experience while visiting the exhibition at the Pavillon des Sessions.

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165 Ibid.

166 The choices of display of any ethnographic object tells as much about the curator as about the object.
Cultural diversity is translated into absence of differences through the trick of the essence of humanity and the universality of art which are both Western concepts. Therefore is this museum project really an attempt to be a dialogue and to show mutual respect? Are visitors sensitised to the relativity of their world view, to discover 'Otherness' as such? Or, does the Musée du Quai Branly’s first realisation only allow visitors to encounter themselves? Creating homogeneity through the art concept is coherent with the particularity of the French nation which consists in considering that, to be French signifies also partaking in the national culture. (See: French cultural exception: French cultural capital, 53). Therefore culture is institutionalised and tightly controlled. The museum’s mission is formulated in terms of offers to the public and not the other way around (See: 1.2.3 What is the museum’s mission?,15). This top-down vision of the museum’s role in society is echoed in Emmanuel Désveaux’s statement: "It will be then the opportunity for all these people that come to the museum by cultural duty, to remind them of a number of things on alterity, diversity and cultural difference." Even if cultural diversity is a daily reality and negotiation, it is considered that the public(s) should be taught about these realities; and it is their 'cultural duty' to take for granted what they are taught. The reading of cultural objects in contemporary France is institutionalised although it is a partial, ephemeral and an instrumental reading. Consequently, does the museum mirror the French persons in their diversity?

**Underground**

So what is the consequence of this one sided interpretation of cultural objects? The people whose culture is on display and who often could bring alternative - not to say informative - interpretations of the objects are the absentee of the dialogue. On the day of my visit at the Pavillon des Sessions, while watching the (in my view, rather puzzling) documentary on Jacques Kerchache, the two guardians who helped me find more information on the 'Fang sculpture,' entered via the two entries on each side of the flat screen, peered at the video (at a time when Jacques Kerchache was talking about the magic instant when he displays objects), and they laughed. A discussion was prompted. Obviously, the two individuals of African descent did not agree with the discourse. It is only an anecdote, but a significant anecdote.

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The ambiguity of paying tribute: the gift and credits principle

It is argued that this monologue is more, and not less, problematic when coupled with the acknowledgement principle. In one way, people whose culture is exhibited at the Louvre and will be soon exhibited at the Musée du Quai Branly, can be rightfully proud of it. Yet, it creates this ambivalent situation when for instance one receives an unwanted present and nonetheless is compelled to say thank you. Mark O’Neill sums up the dilemma: "While appreciation of a culture’s achievement by outsiders is no doubt, A Good Thing, in a situation of unequal power, it can easily shade into an implication that the subjects of appreciation should be grateful that they are being appreciated."

An unchallenged national imaginary?

Achille Mdembe discussing French multiculturalism, considers that "[…] by hint of taking the republican model for such a long time as the achieved vehicle towards inclusion and the emergence of individuality, we have made of the Republic an imaginary institution, and underestimated the original capacities of brutality, discrimination and exclusion." Reinforcing this statement from another perspective, Jean-Loup Amselle analyses how the assimilation process embedded in the French republicanism is ambivalent since, following his analysis, it is tightly combined to raciology and racism. Thus, he shows how France during its civilising mission understood assimilation as regeneration through 'métissage.' It was considered that the white race could be regenerated physically through métissage, while Europeans had a mission to regenerate "morally and intellectually" "the Negro race." From this point of view, it is interesting to look at the museum project in its top-down, paternalistic dimensions keeping with the tradition. Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau declares that there is an incapacity for our society to look at itself, to allow for social confrontation so as to go beyond it. When looking at the museographical space of exhibitions, Annie E Coombes analyses and compares the art presentation of the exhibition "Africa: the Art of a Continent" (Royal Academy of Arts, London) to the exhibition "Siyawela: Love, Loss and Liberation in Art from South Africa (Birmingham)" with the main focus, the exploration of "the possibility or impossibility of meaningfully representing a productively dialectical relationship between the

168 O’Neill, "Enlightenment museums: universal or merely global?" 195
169 Mdembe, "La république désœuvrée," 160. "[…] à force de tenir pendant si longtemps le modèle républicain pour le véhicule achevé de l’inclusion et de l’émergence à l’individualité, nous avons fini par faire de la république une institution imaginaire et à en sous-estimer les capacités originaires de brutalité, de discrimination et d’exclusion."
170 Amselle, Vers un multiculturalisme français, 134
colonial past and a postcolonial future via [...] the temporary exhibition." She argues that "if both exhibitions are understood as representations of history and as appeals to a postcolonial future, then the one [Africa: The Art of a Continent] performed this through displacement, dismemberment, and amnesia, and the other [Siyawela: Love, Loss and Liberation in Art from South Africa] through embodiment and commemoration." Likewise, it can be argued that the art exhibition of ethnographic cultural objects at the Louvre translates reluctance towards social confrontation by being about forgetting.

A cultural investment
The Musée du Quai Branly is part of a suite of cultural equipment projects launched by France and centred around the same core ideas of understanding and dialogue, which shows that the new buzz word 'social cohesion' is a political stake. As a matter of fact, the National Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions closed in Paris and the collection was transferred to the future Museum of the Civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean, located in Marseille. This project is interesting both in terms of history and politics. Marseille was a major harbour through which a lot of people from North Africa immigrated to France (especially when the French colonial empire ceased to exist). Therefore, one can deduce that there may be a desire to enlarge the definition of what French popular arts and traditions are. As well, by placing France, and its popular arts and traditions, within a wider European and Mediterranean context, the new museum creates a parallel with the European political project which is strongly debated in France in particular regarded to Turkey’s entry in the European Union (which raises an identity question: What is Europe and who is European?). In the same trend, the building which housed the Museum of arts from Africa and Oceania will re-open to the public in April 2007 as a museum on the history of immigration, the National Centre for the History of Immigration. Sylvie Chanal in her interesting thesis, "French Museums facing representation of the diversity of cultures: societal and museographical stakes and

172 Coombes, "The object of Translation," 236.
173 Ibid, 237.
174 Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires (MNATP). The museum is about French popular art and traditions.
175 Musée des Civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée. For more information, see, http://www.musee-europemediterranee.org/
176 Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration. For more information, see: http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/
which actors?,”  highlights that the National Centre for the History of Immigration project deals with political history and not individuals and that the title of the new museum tells right away who speaks: a representative of the French State. For Sylvie Chanal this project shows "the concerns of a 'laic' and Republican State:  Their history is Our history."  In this perspective, the Musée du Quai Branly project is the first major cultural equipment within a wider project, and because of its location in Paris, its prestigious architecture and its impressive budget, it contributes to position itself as a reference for many museums all over France. In this respect, one may guess that the influence of the Parisian museum world does not move towards a better representation of the diversity of French people in museums at the scale of the country. Nevertheless, some initiatives do exist. Sylvie Chanal investigated two different initiatives undertaken by two museums (Musée Dauphinois and Museum of Lyon) towards community work and cultural representation in the exhibition space, even if, as shown by Sylvie Chanal, their work is also contrived by the French nation's self-perception.

**A blend of hip hop music and Edith Piaf**

When will different voices take over French museums and enter an official public space so as to truly establish a dialogue and celebrate interculturality?  By blending music coming from the suburbs (hip hop or rap music) and a song by the former French singer Edith Piaf, the film Hate conveys a message that there is no clear cut between the imaginary ‘We' and 'the Other'.

It is the author's sincere hope that the Musée du Quai Branly will keep to its mission of "mobility" and adopt a more culturally sensitive approach and museography to keep in tune with the contemporary world and its culturally diverse people.

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177 Chanal, "Le musée français face à la représentation de la diversité des cultures aujourd’hui: Enjeux sociétaux et muséographiques et avec quels acteurs?,” 2005.
178 Ibid, 63.
179 Hate (la haine), Mathieu Kassovitz, 1995.
**Post-scriptum**

While completing my thesis, I received an announcement for a conference entitled, "La France, ses musées, son identité/ French Museums and Identity," organised by the Paris Center of the University of Chicago and the Maison René Givounès of the University Paris X Nanterre. The topic of the conference is the nexus of the thesis's main aim and questions. Therefore, the author thinks that it is interesting for the reader to put the thesis's topic in perspective with a continuing debate. When the thesis aims at analysing the birth of the Musée du Quai Branly, a museum of 'the Others' and its impact in terms of representation in contemporary France; the conference questions the possibilities of the Musée du Quai Branly, the national Centre for the History of Immigration and the Museum of the Civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean, to "move beyond dualistic oppositions between 'primitive' and 'civilized', 'French' and 'immigrant', 'European' and 'other', and, ultimately, 'us' and 'them'."

The conference is planned 1-2 June 2006 at the University of Chicago Centre in Paris. The conference programme is reproduced in appendix 7.