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Transatlantic Unity On Display: The “White Legend” and the “Pact of Silence” in Madrid’s Museum of the Americas

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The Museum of the Americas (Museo de América, hereafter “Museo”) in the Spanish capital of Madrid is celebrating its 75th birthday this year. In July 2011, I first visited the museum in my role as an anthropologist studying Latin American immigrant families and children in Spain. I was intrigued to encounter a temporary exhibit co-created by Museo staff and Latin American immigrant youth, entitled “Science and Innocence.” In glass exhibit cases, museum-goers could consider artifacts that curators selected from the museum’s collections, thematically paired with objects that children brought to the museum to represent their own connections to Latin America. For example, one travel-themed display case held two 15th-century Chimu pots depicting boats, a 20th-century sub-Arctic bark kayak model, and a colorful, thoroughly modern ceramic taxi knickknack (Figure 1). The museum’s subdirector later explained to me that such pairings materialized the dialogue referenced in the title “Science and Innocence”: on one side the scientists with their duly catalogued objects, and on the other side children, innocence, with the peanut butter and slingshots they brought to the Museo.

“Science and Innocence” is simultaneously an innovative, pro-immigrant project and an effective rehearsal of familiar Spanish narratives of colonial benevolence. The Museo was founded during World War II by the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco to glorify the conquerors and explorers of the Americas. Since that moment, it has played an important role in producing narratives about Spain’s relationship with Latin America.¹ Most recently, Museo staff have made thoughtful attempts to draw in a Latin American immigrant audience, in a nation where nearly 14% of the population is composed of immigrants or naturalized foreign-born.² Amid an ongoing economic crisis and increasing xenophobia across Europe, Spain’s official stance toward migrants is one of “integration,” expressing ambivalence about the consequences of a multicultural population for Spanish national integrity (Tucker 2014:903). I view the Museo as a convenient window into how Spain’s history is used in this ambivalent project of integrating immigrants, so that immigration itself becomes further evidence of the enduring value of Spanish colonialism. In both its permanent exhibits and the temporary exhibit I consider, the Museo tends to represent the conquest, colonialism, and immigration as neutral. These representations facilitate

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¹Though it is important not to overemphasize the hegemonic force of museums in narrating the nation, the art historian Selma Holo has shown that during particularly fragile moments in Spain’s history, “it was understood that museums contributed to the balancing act...that allowed modern Spain to cohere as a nation” (1999:4).

²Notas de prensa, INE, June 25, 2015, <http://www.ine.es/prensa/np917.pdf>, accessed June 26, 2015.

discourses of transatlantic brotherhood and align well with contemporary memory work in Spain that silences (in the sense of Trouillot 1995) the violences of the more recent Civil War past (1936–1939).

The Museo's narrative arc originates in the Hispanism of the late 19th century and early 20th century, which Franco's regime drew upon as well. Hispanism is an ideology of an essential Spanish identity, shared by Spaniards and colonial subjects alike, manifested in language, culture, and religion. Through the ostensibly benign mechanism of conquest, Spanish values were disseminated among colonial subjects (Faber 2005:67, see also Tucker 2014:911), producing a transatlantic "Hispanic nation" (Feros 2005:114, see also Alvarez Junco 2011:316, Resina 2005:163). Hispanism generally narrates conquest and colonialism as beneficial, a positive depiction that has been described by historians as the "White Legend of Spanish imperialism" (Feros 2005:111). This "White Legend" referred not to skin color but rather to intangible, positive associations of whiteness, in contrast with the so-called "Black Legend" that suggested historians primarily portrayed Spain's imperial accomplishments as negative. Today, key state institutions like the Museo work to integrate Latin American immigrants into the Spanish polity through the same rhetorical tactic of drawing upon a shared past of benevolent and benign imperialism, which requires silencing the relationship between contemporary immigration and the structural violence of colonialism.

As Trouillot tells us, "history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives. What matters most are the process and conditions of production of such narratives" (1995:25). In this article, I examine the narratives that Museo staff produce about Spain's relationship with Latin America, in particular those that strategically authorize Spanish colonialism while creatively incorporating a Latin American immigrant audience. I do not take up audience reception in this essay, but instead focus on the relevance of history to the present efforts of the Museo through an analysis of texts, images, architecture, and artifacts. The article begins with a discussion of the history and political context of the Museo, because the immigrant incorporation projects of the postcolonial Museo are also heir to the Hispanism that characterized its origins and history. I then analyze the 2011 exhibit's use of Latin American children as potent political symbols for softening the incorporation of immigrants into the transatlantic Hispanist project. Recalling that colonized nations were viewed as children (Stephens 1995:18), it is particularly striking that the Museo's welcoming of Latin American immigrant children is done through invoking the positive impact of colonialism.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE MUSEO DE AMERICA IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

In the four short sub-sections that follow I offer a necessarily brief sketch of the Spanish nation's American collections in historical and political context. Spain's empire-building project saw the transformation of the Americas under Spanish conquest in the 16th century and subsequent colonialism. The Latin American independence movements of the 19th century coincided with Spanish discourses of Hispanism and the development of the first national archaeological museum. Spain's Second Republic was defeated in 1939, after a three-year Civil War, by Franco's Falangist forces, and under Franco's decades-long dictatorship, part of the archaeological museum's holdings would be diverted to found the

Museo. Franco's death was followed by a transition to democracy in the late 1970s–early 1980s, under which Spanish immigration policy was relaxed. In the 1990s, the Museo would be remodeled to celebrate the quincentennial of Columbus's 1492 "discovery" of the Americas. Throughout the 2000s, migration rates rose, stalling only at the time of the economic crisis. This complex relationship between Spain and its ex-colonies in the Americas can be tracked through a short history of what ultimately became the Museo.

1. Building the nation (late 19th–early 20th c.)

Much of the Americanist collection that would later constitute the holdings of the Museo originated in a gift to the Spanish king Carlos III in the late 18th century, which he formalized as the Real Gabinete de Historia Natural (the Royal Cabinet of Natural History).³ In 1867, a new National Archaeology Museum was founded, using part of the holdings of the Real Gabinete (Bolaños 2008[1997]:289).⁴

The founding of the archaeology museum fit with the zeitgeist – across Europe, nations focused on "popular understanding of the past" (Boyd 1997:xiii). During the same period, archaeological studies began in Spain (Díaz-Andreu 1995:54), the "national philologies" were founded (Resina 2005:163), and histories and paintings celebrating Spain were commissioned. Not coincidentally, Spaniards faced the simultaneous awareness that their empire was on its last legs, as wars of independence in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines brought Spain's domination to a formal close (Feros 2005:113). As the empire contracted, nation-building replaced it. The upcoming celebrations of the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's voyage in 1892 would draw on the Conquest of America as an important symbolic resource as part of the "White Legend" that solidified at this time (Feros 2005:110, 116). Indeed, in 1912 the government declared an annual holiday commemorating Columbus's "discovery" on October 12 – a significant date for Catholicism, on which the Virgin of Pilar had been celebrated for centuries (Alvarez Junco 2011:338).

2. Consolidating the transatlantic (1939–1945)

In its early years, Franco's dictatorship drew upon Hispanism and the "White Legend" in deploying the themes of colonial benevolence, the Spanish "personality" of the Americas (Feros 2005:123, citing Ballesteros), and the brotherhood of Spaniards and Latin Americans (Díaz-Andreu 1995:46, see also Boyd 1997: 235). In this political climate, the legend remained significant as a way to unite Spaniards who had very recently been violently divided – that is, through this shared, rose-colored history the Spanish could come together. It also helped to assuage persistent criticisms from overseas of Franco's government, particularly as Latin American underdevelopment continued to be a point of comparison for a shattered postwar Spain. Developing ties with Latin America was also politically important during the diplomatic isolation of Franco following Spain's declared neutrality in World War II (Preston 1993:582).⁵

³A recreation of Carlos III's Real Gabinete is one of the intriguing features of the current Museo's permanent collection.

⁴It is telling, of course, that objects from the Americas would be located in a "National" archaeology museum; see Anderson 1983:184–5 for a discussion of colonial museums.

⁵See Faber 2005:66–7 on the argument that Latin America is more bound up with Spain than with the U.S., Resina 2005:167–8 on Spain's efforts to play an important role in Latin America, and Feros 2005: 111 on the aim to reorient Latin America toward Spain instead of the United States.

During this period, the history of the Americas was institutionalized through the founding of university chairs, research centers, and journals. That institutionalization “made it possible to defend this imperial narrative as an ‘objective truth’ based not on counterfeit data but on genuine and internationally credited ‘scientific’ research” (Feros 2005:112, see also Boyd 1997:239, Romero de Pablos and Santesmases 2008). In line with this tendency, Franco used museums as propaganda to promote a particular narrative of national history (Bolaños 2008[1997]:396, Gutiérrez Bolívar 1995:11).⁶

On April 19, 1941,⁷ the Museo de América was formally created by decree, an excerpt of which reveals the emphasis that the American collections enable on Spain’s heroism, culture, and extraordinariness:

“The vast treasures held in the General Archive of the Indies allow a reconstruction of the heroic deed of the discovery of the Americas, where our sailors, conquerors and missionaries brought Catholic culture along with the force of its science, its daringness and its faith...The Museum of the Americas will constantly inspire Spaniards with its testimony to so many extraordinary acts, and will give just satisfaction to the American peoples, studying and valuing their cultures.”⁸

Three years later, the Museo officially opened as a set of displays physically located within the National Archaeological Museum.⁹ As described in a 1944 newspaper report, the eloquent speech on that occasion of the Minister of National Education, Ibáñez Martín, stated that the Museo

“makes even more evident the presence of the Americas in the Spanish nation, tightening the bonds of union that were always present but that today reveal an understanding and brotherhood among the nations that make up Hispanity. [Ibáñez] next spoke of the work of Spain in the Americas, saying that it also developed mining and industry, created cities, and left on innumerable things the mark of its spirituality.”¹⁰

Here, the narrative of Spanish history highlights unity, brotherhood, and transatlantic understanding. Pride in Spain’s glorious feats merges with fraternal affection for the Americas. The fractured nation can be reunited through a glorification of its distant past and extending a hand to the ex-colonial.

⁶Franco also established “regional ethnographic museums, bullfighting museums (*museos taurinos*)...and the conversion of Toledo’s Alcazar into a memorialization of and monument to its own siege during the Civil War” (Davis 2012:23). Camprubí writes convincingly of a “co-evolution of science, technology, and religion in this particular setting” (2014:42), and the treatment of archaeology as a science in this context (compare Abu El-Haj 2001 on the Israel/Palestine case) adds a further example to his broad-ranging assessment.

⁷Almost exactly one year earlier, on April 1, 1940, Franco issued a decree that would compel the construction of the “Valley of the Fallen,” a massive and currently controversial monument intended to honor those on the winning side, where over 30,000 civil war dead as well as Franco himself have been laid to rest (Comisión de Expertos 2011:3, Ferrándiz 2011, González-Ruibal 2009).

⁸Boletín Oficial del Estado, Núm. 121., page 3035–6, May 1, 1941.

⁹“Creación del Museo.” <http://www.mecd.gob.es/museodeamerica/el-museo/un-poco-de-historia2/Creaci-n-del-Museo.html>, accessed March 20, 2014.

¹⁰“Solemne Inauguración del Museo de América.” ABC, July 14, 1944; page 11.

3. Architecture of civilization (1945–1975)

Following the defeat of fascism, one of Franco's emblematic strategies to cement domestic authority was by building a number of monuments, symbolically located on a famous, heavily damaged Civil War battlefield in Madrid, that would honor and memorialize the victory and the (Falangist) lives lost (Aguilar Fernández 2002:85). To add to the layers of intense symbolic representation, it was on this very site that architects Luis Moya and Luis Martínez Feduchi labored for a decade, building a new home for the Museo. Furthermore, the style the architects chose was, significantly, a colonial one: as the Museo's website states,

“following the ideology of its founding decree, [the building] attempted to suggest the idea of the missionizing and civilizing work of Spain in the Americas. For this reason it was conceived in a historicist and neocolonial style, with an arch on the façade, a tower that suggested the towers of the baroque churches in the Americas, and a convent-like arrangement.”¹¹

F.T. Naranjo's 1965 photograph, taken from under the legs of a horse on one of these monuments, Victory Arch, would help cement the interpretation (Figure 2). The Museo's building and its very location contributed to the broader narrative about Spain's historic dominance and centrality in the Americas, effectively aligning with a related story about Franco's dominance and Madrid's centrality in Spain.

This new building opened in the fall of 1965, as the regime had just concluded its propaganda campaign marking “25 Years of Peace” – that is, 25 years since Franco's forces won on April 1st 1939 (Preston 1993:713). By this point, Spain had progressed economically to the extent that Franco's regime was being judged more positively on its outcomes (Aguilar Fernández 2002:25, 131). The first distinguished guests of the Museo in its new setting were escorted by Pilar Fernández Vega, the first female museum curator in Spain, who had directed the Museo since its founding (Díaz-Andreu 1998:135) (Figure 3). In the article accompanying Naranjo's iconic photo, the ABC news correspondent Pedro Rocamora describes the museum poetically, highlighting the beauty and peacefulness of Spanish colonialism:

“Lookout of History, watchtower of time, anchored ship in which was once the old and imperial heart of Spain and its colonies. Here nothing is dead, it's breathing and real...”

“...From North to South America we follow the wake of a colorful civilization, the same one that the conquerors' astonished eyes must have fallen upon. And then without violence – a smooth transition – the springtime of the vicerealties.”

“...And together with the work of science, that of the spirit. Spain, conceived of as a mission...When the murmur of the swords quieted, understanding and peace were inaugurated beneath the symbol of the Cross. A poor, humble Spain nailed the great flag of culture to the unknown landscape of an unexpected Paradise. Cathedrals,

¹¹“Historia del edificio.” <http://www.mecd.gob.es/museodeamerica/el-museo/un-poco-de-historia2/Una-joya-arquitectonica.html>, accessed July 21, 2016.

convents and palaces, mints, printing presses, universities, and above all, a faith and a language....There is a moment when the spectator doesn't know where the indigenous ends and the Hispanic begins, because everything here is treated with such tact, delicacy, and love...."¹²

Rocamora's evaluation places emphasis upon the distant past, the benign and benevolent work of the conquerors, the importance of faith and the irrevocable melding, encounter, even brotherhood where the indigenous and Hispanic blend so well that they cannot be distinguished.

During this period too, we also see the political alignment between Spain and Latin America. For example, a 1966 clip from No-Do, the news and documentary service that ran short reels prior to films all over Spain during Franco's rule, reported on the visit of Nicaragua's President Schick to Madrid. Schick laid a wreath at the statue of Isabel, the Catholic Queen who sponsored Columbus's voyages, and reportedly stated that "Spain today is for America a spiritual empire where the sun never sets on culture, chivalry, and patriotism," then admired the Museo's collections before meeting with Franco.¹³ This consistent depiction of Spain's efforts in the Americas aligns with the narrative that coalesced in the work of the Hispanists at the turn of the century. As will be seen in the more recent work of the museum, this narrative persists.

4. Transition and beyond (1975–1994)

When Franco died, Spain eased peacefully into democracy. Recent scholars of Spanish politics have argued that one of the key characteristics of this "Transition" was and continues to be the deliberate silencing of the discord of the Civil War and the dictatorship (Aguilar Fernández 2002:18, compare Trouillot 1995).¹⁴ This assessment, however, extends primarily to the recent past – the longer-ago colonial past remained an important tool that Spaniards might use toward unity. It was a delicate balance. On one hand, there was "redoubtable backlash against ...any form of Spanish nationalism...Spanish identity rapidly became synonymous with Francoism" (Alvarez Junco 2011:2, see also Boyd 1997:306–7). At the same time, the government needed to identify symbols that would appeal to diverse and divided citizens in order to promote allegiance to a Spanish state during a time when there was legitimate concern across Europe about national fragmentation (Holo 1999:6, 7). Yet very few symbols remained that all Spaniards could turn to as signs of their character or unity: "Only the legend of Spain in America remains intact" (Feros 2005:127–8).

We might expect to see the Museo benefit from the prioritization placed on that "legend of Spain in America." Furthermore, museums in general were well funded during the transition because of their symbolic power and ability to offer a narrative of a shared past and implying a shared future (Holo 1999:5,14, see also Bolaños 2008[1997]:442). In addition, by the mid-1990s, Spain's government had renewed political ties with many Latin American

¹²ABC, Oct 27, 1965, pp 30–31 and 34–35. "El Museo de America." Pedro Rocamora.

¹³No-Do 23-05-1966 N° 1220C at <http://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-1220/1477394/> accessed June 23, 2015.

¹⁴There is no museum explicitly memorializing the pain of that period. Compare the post-authoritarian museums that have been founded or planned across Latin America in nations emerging from dictatorships and state repression in the 1980s and 1990s (Bilbija and Payne 2011:2). It is possible that a Franco museum may one day appear with the efforts of the Comisión de Expertos para el Futuro del Valle de los Caídos (2011:7).

nations (Holo 1999:20). However, in 1981, the museum had been closed for renovations. It would remain closed for thirteen years, until the approach of an important anniversary: the quincentennial of Columbus's "discovery." The Spanish government invested on numerous fronts to make the quincentennial both memorable and marketable – from Expo '92 in Sevilla (Maddox 2004) to the summer Olympics in Barcelona. The Museo benefited from this timing, and was thoroughly reconceptualized and renovated at state expense (Price and Price 1995:103).¹⁵

A recent newspaper article suggested that the "colonialist vision of a Spain under the shadow of Franco disappeared from the building in 1994...with the re-opening, everything changed."¹⁶ The quincentennial-era curating team emphasized what they called "anthropological themes" (Jiménez Villalba 1995:53), a style of organization that privileged common purpose rather than culture area or chronology. Consider the travel-themed objects that I opened the article with – a modern taxi knickknack sharing a glass case with a 15th-century Chimú boat. The anthropological vision, in the words of the museum's current director, Concepción García, "'avoids evaluation and centers on the importance of all cultures from a perspective of equality.'"¹⁷ Yet this organization enables a narrative of Spanish colonialism as simply the vehicle through which these objects were collected, downplaying the inequality and violence of the conquest and colonial period and more recent exploitative or neocolonial purchases.¹⁸

Critics of these exhibits in the past two decades have pointed to the way that the violences of the conquest and colonial period have been silenced in favor of narratives of discovery and amity (Price and Price 1995:106–7, Holo 1999:21, Tucker 2014:912, compare Jones 2004 on the rationalization of American Indian mortality).¹⁹ As the art historian Jorge Luis Marzo writes, "The emphasis was on the bandages, not the wounds: the idea was put forth that Spain was magnanimous because it accepted the apology of the conquered, rather than the other way around...Mexican altars to the dead are displayed with no mention of the *other* dead" (2010:55).

I concur with these critiques, and build on them with two additional claims. First, it is telling that the intention to refrain from moral judgment fits well with the general policy and practice of a "pact of silence" that reigned during and after the transition to democracy, "a deliberate, but largely tacit, agreement to 'forget' the past" (Davis 2005:863–4, see also

¹⁵The Museo was officially "reauthorized" by royal decree in 1993, at which time its purpose was stated to be twofold: researching the Americas and, still, highlighting the important work that Spaniards did to make those cultures known. In the language of the decree, "documentation and diffusion of the studies and expeditions carried out by Spaniards over several centuries on the American continent, thanks to which the existence and characteristics of those cultures could be known in Europe." Real Decreto 682/1993, de 7 de mayo, por el que se reorganiza el Museo de América. BOE num 126, May 27 1993, pp 16033–5.

¹⁶Sergio Lillo, April 19, 2016, "De Alaska al Tesoro de los Quimbayas," El País, [http://www.mcu.es/visitantemuseo/buscarMuseos.do?](http://www.mcu.es/visitantemuseo/buscarMuseos.do?prev_layout=visitantemuseo&layout=visitantemuseo&ultimoAnio=2016&language=es&TOTAL=19&POS=16&MAX=1&action=Sig)

[prev_layout=visitantemuseo&layout=visitantemuseo&ultimoAnio=2016&language=es&TOTAL=19&POS=16&MAX=1&action=Sig](http://www.mcu.es/visitantemuseo/&layout=visitantemuseo&ultimoAnio=2016&language=es&TOTAL=19&POS=16&MAX=1&action=Sig) uiente, accessed July 19, 2016.

¹⁷Lillo, *ibid*.

¹⁸As museum studies scholars have shown, collection and acquisition can be forms of structural violence. Notably, we are explicitly not told who donated the Museo's objects (Gutiérrez Bolívar 1995:20), in a sort of museological "pact of silence." For example, a central part of the Museo's collection is the result of the writer Juan Larrea's regularly outbidding the Peruvian government; Larrea himself "confessed on various occasions a certain guilt for having pillaged an important part of the Peruvian people's archaeological heritage" (Gutiérrez Bolívar 1995:8).

¹⁹The Prices are especially critical of the museum's failure to examine Africans, and slavery, in the Americas (1995:106–7).

González-Ruibal 2009:65). The tendency to silence the Spanish Civil War is merged here, I suggest, with the White Legend of Hispanism, so that the impact of conquest and colonization across the Americas could be framed as benevolent or suppressed when troubling. Second, the White Legend fits neatly with the incorporation of new multicultural audiences, namely the Latin American immigrants who have become a far more visible and contested presence in Spain since the Museo reopened. Forgetting the Civil War has been represented as necessary for joint survival in contemporary Spain; forgetting the violence of the conquest similarly paves the way for discourses of transatlantic brotherhood and alliance. This latter point is perhaps most visible via chronology: the day in 1994 that the reimagined Museo finally opened was, of course, October 12.

II. INTEGRATION AND INNOCENCE

Since the Museo re-opened, the population of immigrants has rapidly grown – from 3.1% of Spain's population in 1999 (24% of which were from Latin America) to 13.8% of Spain's population in 2009 (37% of which were from Latin America).²⁰ Such high rates of an immigration “which potentially disrupts the Spanish nation” (Author 2013:91), especially when co-occurring with the global economic crisis, lead to yet another moment where Spaniards are divided, and it remains unclear how, or whether, immigrants will be incorporated or excluded. The drive for unity looks different now than it did following the transition to democracy, since it is less about uniting different internal factions or regions and rather about rehearsing the notion that Latin Americans and Spaniards fit together.

White-Legend-style discourses of Hispanicist brotherhood, made possible by the downplaying of a conquest that still bears great symbolic weight across Latin America, would thus remain productive during this decade (compare Maddox 2004:193). At today's Museo, we see the residue of this process that lasted more than a century: the persistence of the notion of the Americas themselves as meaningfully Spanish. As I will show in the following discussion, in the Museo's exhibits, both the Spanish conquest and contemporary immigration to Spain are denuded of their controversial elements and portrayed relatively neutrally. My discussion of the recent state of this postcolonial Museo draws upon published brochures, websites, annual reports, and essays by its staff; multiple visits to the Museo and my own fieldnotes and photographs made during those visits; and a July 2011 conversation with the Museo's subdirector, Félix Jimenez.

1. Putting immigrant youth in the Museo's frame

Postcolonial museums in a number of countries have, since the 1990s, developed strategies of inclusion such as shared curatorship (Boast 2011:56).²¹ This tendency is on display in the Museo's approach under director Concepción García, and the Museo has been singled out as particularly effective in the area of connecting museums to social justice in a recent

²⁰Vicente, Trinidad L.: Latin American Immigration to Spain, 2010. <http://www.migrationeducation.org/48.1.html?&rid=162&cHash=96b3134cdb899a06a8ca6e12f41eafac>, accessed April 8, 2014.

²¹The Museo receives around 65,000 visitors a year; of sixteen state-owned museums, this number ranks twelfth (Cifras de visitantes de los Museos Estatales, 2015, accessed July 19, 2016; http://www.mcu.es/visitantemuseo/buscarMuseos.do?prev_layout=visitantemuseo&layout=visitantemuseo&ultimoAnio=2016&language=es&TOTAL=19&POS=16&MAX=1&action=Siguiente)

governmental report.²² As subdirector Jiménez explained when we met, the Museo's current practice is to use patrimony to the benefit of Latinos. The first project under this policy was called "Conoce mi cultura" (Meet my culture), which involved the usual school visits to the museum, but with a twist: "The students of Latino origin plan the class visit...they relate it to the materials the class is working on," said Jiménez. In this model, the source of knowledge is the Latino student and he or she is put in a position of authority. At the same time, however, it suggests that the onus is on the immigrant to explain and represent himself or herself to other students. The Museo is thus simultaneously a site where Spaniards and immigrants alike can reflect on how the *immigrants* are the ones with diversity (compare Appadurai and Breckenridge 1992:44). Boast frames inclusionist practices such as these as welcome and well-intentioned, but potentially structurally neocolonial (2011:57).

"Science and Innocence," a collaboration between Spanish adults and Latin American children, opened in the summer of 2011. This exhibit, too, involves Latin American immigrant subjects as participants, an emphasis which indirectly normalizes Spanish movements across the globe (compare Hill 2008 on indirect indexicality). Significantly, these are not just any immigrant subjects – they are children. As scholars of childhood have argued, children are potent symbols through which adults narrate political tensions (Dubinsky 2010). Globally, children are represented as sentimentalized and innocent, so that wielding children as rhetorical resources allows the seeming simplification of complex political issues (Dubinsky 2010:14, see also Ruddick 2003:358). Children are thus an ideal vehicle for framing the outcomes of the conquest and colonialism as positive, in the face of continued criticism of colonialism. As innocent subjects, they can help to ameliorate the anti-immigrant sentiments emerging across Europe since the mid-1990s (Flynn 2001:708). And they require protection, so that the tacit agreement to forget both colonialism and the civil war gains further strength: to preserve the "innocence" of the children it is necessary to avoid those areas of history that no one wants to dwell on anyway. Finally, children are potent symbols in part because they are often structurally silenced, and thus more likely to collude with the adult's story, less able to contest the White Legend.

Intersecting this global image of children with the far more contentious theme of Latin American immigration reveals the double-sidedness of children as representational devices. The anthropologist Sharon Stephens noted that while children are being perceived as 'at risk,' they are also perceived as 'the risk' (1995:13). The Latin American children featured in this exhibit are, in everyday discourse and conversation, 'the risk' – whether generally, as an unassimilated population threatening the state or the coherence of the Spanish nation, or specifically and individually, as hypothetical members of Latin American gangs. But in this exhibit, they are framed as innocent – a political argument that effectively promotes a pro-immigrant view, but intriguingly, does so by drawing on the hundred-year-old framework of Hispanism and the White-Legend notion that colonialism was a positive force. Conversely, the focus on immigrants can also lend itself to the support of a narrative in which Spain remains the *madre patria*, a magnet for its diasporic members, and the locus of modernity to which impoverished migrants flow from around the former colonies.

²²See <http://www.mecd.gob.es/museosmassociales/presentacion.html>, accessed July 21, 2016.

The exhibit brochure produced for the public makes the links between Spain and the Americas, and their benign nature, explicit precisely through drawing on the positive imagery of children and families:

“the Americas and Spain have more than just a language and culture in common. Over time, thousands of citizens have traveled from one land to another, in most cases in search of a better future, their own ‘El Dorado,’ sometimes for political motives, sometimes economic. To the secular *mestizaje* between us, is nowadays added the families who have built a bridge between both worlds: Spanish and American children, Spanish and American parents who share a project and a life no matter what side of the ocean they are on.”

The language used in the materials describing this project present the relationship between Spain and the Americas as a form of kinship. Migration, and the racial and cultural mixture referred to as “mestizaje,” are normalized, while their violent or extractive antecedents are silenced, as will be seen in our tour of the exhibit itself.

2. A visit to the exhibit

The exhibit I visited was part of a year-long, UNICEF-supported project called “Yo soy América” (I am the Americas; Sept 2010–Dec 2011). This “sociocultural project...directed at boys and girls of Latin American origin, between eight and twelve, who reside in the Community of Madrid, [had] the objective of contributing to their integration into Madrid society” (Anales 2011:294). Integration in Europe is often equated with a rejection of ethnic exclusion in a context that privileges ideologies of interculturalism and multiculturalism, discourses that occlude the structural inequality and racism prevalent in present-day Europe (Giménez Romero 2008:115, Author 2013:146, Maddox 2004:31–2, Tucker 2014:913).

The first phase of the project invited children to send a story about their origins to the Museo, either uploaded via the project’s website or written on a pamphlet that had been distributed at Madrid public schools with large numbers of immigrant students. In the second phase, staff invited several of those children and their families to visit the Museo and bring “an object that would enrich their story that they would have to define and catalog.” The fruit of that exchange was phase three, the “Science and Innocence” exhibit made up of children’s objects paired with museum artifacts. The brochure produced for the public makes explicit how those pairings should be read: “Just as the objects brought by scientific expeditions transformed the image of the Americas, those deposited by the children, with no scientific conceptualization whatsoever, offer us the opportunity of establishing a new way of considering, a different approach. A conversation between science and innocence. You be the judge.” The final sentence grounds the non-judgmental approach seen throughout the recent “anthropological” work of the Museo. The non-judgmental approach carries the patina of neutrality, a stance that itself is produced through references to science, objectivity, and evidence (Latour and Woolgar 1986).

When I visited the exhibit in July 2011, I was greeted first by an introductory panel that explained how

“we want to share the value of our treasures with the Latin American collective. To be a place of encounter, with special attention to the little ones, who are the clearest reflection of our *mestizaje*. The children and grandchildren of those who left and those who have returned. A common past, weighty with stories of love and discovery, a past that is ours, all of ours, a past that can serve to unite us.”

This panel further establishes the relationship between Spain and Latin America as one of kinship and affection; argues that the shared past is a transatlantic one; and introduces the emphasis on children as unique, extraordinary, and special, while simultaneously transforming a complex, often violent history of “mestizaje” or racial and cultural mixture into an innocent project of scientific discovery. Meanwhile, the subtitle of the exhibit, “The world turns, and people move,” naturalizes migration, downplaying the structural and historical forces that give rise to it. The subtitle also equates Spanish movement overseas to Latin America five hundred years ago with contemporary Latin American migration, all as natural, neither as extractive nor dependent.²³

The exhibit was composed of the children’s narratives about their connections to Latin America; photographs of their experience in the museum during phase 2; and pairings of contemporary and pre-Colombian artifacts following the “anthropological” frame. In one photograph of the children “exploring” the museum, clad in khaki vests, they are filling in a family tree in their Museo-issued booklet by the light of a flashlight (Figure 4). The emphasis on exploration and discovery is clear in the sartorial details that ground a view of the Spanish project in the Americas as exploratory. That the children were invited to wear the explorer’s vest and pith helmet, and move through the Americanist artifacts with a flashlight, aligned them as well with Spain.²⁴

Jiménez told me later that the family tree activity was completed while the children were in the room where the *casta* (roughly, lineage or caste) paintings hang. *Casta* paintings are a series of colonial-era family portraits showing the outcomes of *mestizaje* or “mixing”: a father of one racial category, a mother of another, and the resulting child, who occupies yet a third category (Katzew 2004). Jiménez explained that the juxtaposition of the *casta* paintings with this exercise sent the message that “the farther back you go, the more you can see that there are all kinds of people in our ancestry, a real mix. This is another way to see immigration as positive, to see that the only constant is change. People want to protect the way things are and keep them from changing, but people move, since the Neolithic. And we also wanted to teach the absurdity of the race concept with this exercise.”

Following several challenges, the children had to solve a coded phrase that read “the most valuable object in this museum is the one that you brought.” That evening, each child had brought something that highlighted his or her connection to Latin America. I have already

²³Compare the current Spanish passport, featuring “the voyages of Columbus and his three ships” followed by “different animals and their migratory travels through the world, literally suggesting that the arrival of the Spaniards to the Americas was a process that was just as natural, biological, and inevitable as the whales moving through the marine currents around the world” (Marzo 2010:55).

²⁴A similar and more recent effort to put visitors in the shoes of a Spanish explorer is “Aventura en la Pirámide Chimú,” or “Adventure in the Chimú Pyramid,” a “new game in which you can begin your adventure as an archaeologist. It is a virtual excavation using Kinect technology, of a pyramid of the Chimú culture of northern Peru.” <http://www.mecd.gob.es/museodeamerica/espacio-interactivo/Tanto-que-disfrutar-jugando---/Chim--AR.html>, accessed July 21, 2016.

described the travel-themed case in my opening (Figure 1). In that case, the different objects were distinguished – with the artifacts labeled with provenance and cultural origin (eg “Chimu pot with sailors, Peru 1470-1532, Inventory Number XX”) and the children’s contributions signaled with the children from the exhibit’s logo – a brown-skinned boy and light-skinned girl – and labeled with a decontextualized description of the object (e.g. “taxi knickknack”), with no date and only occasionally a place of origin. However, the two kinds of objects were made equivalent through solemn placement behind glass, tasteful lighting, even framing, as can be seen in this second example, also arranged “anthropologically” around the theme of texts, which pairs a copy of the Aztec Tudela codex with the explorer’s notebook that the Museo issued the participating children, and with a book by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío contributed by one of the children (Figure 5).

I was struck by how the exhibit seemed to represent the conquest and colonialism as positive. The immigrant children, dressed as explorers, were invited to identify with Spain and the Spanish. When I proposed to Jiménez that the explorer theme might have the effect of minimizing the violence of the colonial encounter, he suggested that my interpretation was a consequence of my North American background. Jiménez told me that the U.S. and Europe have quite different ways of thinking about such things, and launched into a discussion of war. Unlike in the U.S., he said, many wars have been fought on the ground in Europe, and so “we know that we’re all equally bad. When Spain went to the Americas, Portugal went to Africa. Everyone sought wealth and power...Debating about things that happened 500 years ago is fruitless. Such is the European perspective.” I understood him to be saying that because everyone is equally bad and greedy, there’s no point in harping on what was done in the past. The position that the conquest has passed and there is little profit in assigning blame fits seamlessly with the post-transition discourse that “every victim is a victim, no matter what side he or she was on” (Comisión de Expertos 2011:7). It also fits with the White Legend, minimizing the earth-shattering consequences of the Spanish conquest for indigenous people in Latin America, consequences that continue to reverberate today in neocolonial and extractive situations.

For Jiménez, the exhibit is doing something deeply important: offering Latin American immigrant youth material with which to “strengthen the American side of them so they can be proud of it in front of their classmates.” He then offered an instructive contrast with the British Museum, which he described as producing a narrative of the historical importance of the British empire, explaining that “Spain can’t do this, because...we did not have the power after a certain point to do archaeology. So our museum is selling something different...What we sell here is the idea that despite the differences, we participate in a common culture.” For “sale” at the Museo is a discourse of unity, brotherhood, integration – affective concepts that bring with them a decontextualization and dis-remembering, if not complete disavowal, of violent pasts both distant and more recent. The “product” of transatlantic unity can both modify the fear of immigrant risk and interpret Spain’s historic projects in the Americas in the most generous way possible. A narrative that includes immigrants in the Spanish nation satisfies the Hispanist model of a transatlantic nation and the European model of integration, while downplaying connections between the history of colonialism and the economic underdevelopment that originated such waves of migration.

A disclaimer is on order here: Jiménez and his colleagues are obviously doing important, public anthropological work in opening the Museo to immigrant populations in Madrid. Jimenez asserted when we met that this project means to “present the phenomenon of immigration” neither pejoratively nor as marginalized. This pro-immigrant stance is laudable in the current political context in Europe, but it also occludes the realities of structural inequalities that immigrant children face. Indeed, it is the Museo’s pro-immigrant stance itself that makes the absence of a thoughtful criticism of Spain’s colonial past so notable. Suspending moral judgment, whether about the Spanish conquest or about immigrants’ choices, cements the position that it is best not to confront the human errors of past or present. The corresponding public discourses about immigrant integration, and pan-Hispanic unity, invite amnesia toward both the historical origins of Latin American subjugation, and the current realities of immigrant experiences in Spain.

III. CONCLUSION

As the anthropologist Ivan Karp explains, “The alleged innate neutrality of museums and exhibitions...is the very quality that enables them to become instruments of power as well as instruments of education and experience” (1991:14, see also Latour and Woolgar 1986). The “Science and Innocence” exhibit treats migration in a performatively neutral fashion – “You be the judge.” It naturalizes migration (whether for labor or for conquest and missionization) by invoking children, whose innocence, in the framing of the exhibit, makes immigration tolerable while downplaying the structural inequities migrants suffer. It is a museological effort that is both nourished by and productive of the White Legend. On one hand, the exhibit is effective because Spaniards have learned to be compelled by the idea of transatlantic brotherhood. On the other, the legend itself is strengthened because of the symbolic power of children, whose innocence is evidence of the positive outcomes of colonialism and who, in their structural disempowerment, are more likely to collude with the rehearsal of the legend. That these overdetermined undercurrents are perceptible in an exhibit and an overall project which works hard to promote tolerance for migrants does not exempt them from critical scrutiny.

Present in this exhibit is a narrative about how Spain improved Latin America and about transatlantic brotherhood. Immigrants are treated as collaborators in a project of silencing the negative consequences of Spain’s own presence in Latin America in the past five hundred years. As such, and as Alfredo González-Ruibal has argued, in many parts of Spain “the material remains of Franco’s dictatorship are (mis)managed...a different approach could produce not only a different interpretation of the past, but also foster more democratic values” (2009:66). Interpellating immigrants as a new audience for this material might have required that the Museo’s portrayal of colonialism become more complex in order to accommodate their views on the subject. For example, we know that the celebration of Columbus’s “discovery” was billed by Spain as a re-encounter but experienced by many Latin Americans very differently (Trouillot 1990).

A related observation is that the “pact of silence” about the Civil War extends to and works well with the way that Hispanism represented the conquest – silencing violence, reworking it into something productive. One observation that emerges from this finding is that there is a

longer history to the current “pact of silence:” it is not itself a new strategy, but rather it effectively builds on a kind of positive, productive silencing of unhappy elements of past conflict. The balance between forgetting and remembering so closely examined by today’s scholars of Spain has already been essayed with regard to colonialism. And so, Spanish attitudes toward colonialism and – importantly – Spanish understanding of the history that frames Latin American immigration to Spain today – remain unaltered.

Museums are so often premised on the potential to experience and explore the material culture and lifeways of the ‘other’ (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1992:44). But of course, knowing the ‘other’ is central to constructing the ‘self,’ the national identity (Hall 1996:4–5, see also Hall 1997:174), and we have also seen how the Museo, along with other Hispanist projects, narrativizes Spain as a benevolent civilizing power. The “White Legend” continues to offer a sanitized distant past as midwife of national unity, in this case to integrate immigrants from the former colonies. In so doing, the legend occludes not just the violence of the colonial period but also the inequities of the present, relieving the nation-state of the burden of dealing directly with either its problematic history (both distant and recent) or its diverse present.

One of the reasons this finding is striking is because it did not have to be this way. There were moments in the extensive history of this Museo when an alternate interpretation of the Spanish colonial past seemed possible. Scholars during the Second Republic had designed a critical project examining civilizations, cultures, and languages that had been decimated by the effects of the Spanish conquest (Bolaños 2008[1997]:396, Navarro 1937:1, cited in Gutiérrez Bolívar 1995:11). Some museum specialists, leading up to the quincentennial, had proposed a museum shot through with radical questions and interrogations (Price and Price 1995:104, see also Boast 2011:64). And other museums within Spain – such as the Sephardic Museum in Toledo, which also re-opened in the same period – consulted extensively outside of Spain, recognizing the limits of their ability to respectfully empathize with Spain’s victims alone (Holo 1999:72–3). But even as the Museo adopts a new pro-immigrant stance, it remains a robust contributor to a narrative of national identity, transatlantic brotherhood, and the benevolent imperial past.

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Figure 1.
Display example

Figure 2.

From under the horse's belly. ABC, Oct 27, 1965, pp 30–31.

Figure 3.

Franco at the new museum. Caption reads "New Museum of the Americas: The Head of State visits the exhibits of the Museum of the Americas, displaying the cultural and civilizing work of Spain." ABC – July 18, 1965 pg 15

Figure 4.
Family tree by flashlight

Figure 5.
Display example