

BARCELONA, COLONIAL METROPOLIS: GUIDELINES FOR COMBATING AMNESIA

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Winds of change are blowing through the halls and corridors of Europe's ethnological museums, which, until very recently, remained under lock and key and were as immune to the course of history and the struggles for memory as effigies of times gone by. The latest major current comes from the south, and who knows whether it is threatening to turn into a gale that could make the masks tremble on their pedestals. In a dramatic speech at the University of Ouagadougou on November 28, 2017, French President Macron proposed the temporary or permanent restitution of African cultural heritage to the continent and made a vague commitment to implement the necessary conditions for that within a maximum of five years.¹ This represents an unexpected change of attitude on the part of a country like France, which had transformed the thirst for pillage into a lofty form of aesthetic and cultural appropriation. It seems obvious that such a declaration could not be made without subjecting the historical process of domination that had condoned the ongoing pillage of items from societies outside Europe, namely colonialism, to severe criticism. Thus, in February of the same year, the then-candidate for the Presidency of the French Republic described colonialism as an outright "crime against humanity."²

Therefore, in a context where a largely repressed past appears to be carving out an opening for its return, old European metropolises and countries appear to be adapting, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, to the demands for heritage return that invariably follow a recognition of the moral responsibility for their own colonial past. It would be presumptuous to claim we are facing the definitive end of a process that entailed the widespread concealment of the colonial experience of European countries throughout the twentieth century, and to believe the colonial fracture referred to some time ago by Bancel, Blanchard, and

Lémaire³ has been healed, but there undoubtedly are increasing signs indicating that the silence and indifference of the institutions that guard these collections—and of the beneficiary states that accommodate and fund them—are unsustainable. Italy was probably one of the first countries to make progress on recognition and reparation processes linked to their colonial experience. They returned the famous Axum obelisk to Ethiopia in 2005, and in 2008, they signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Libya, in which they recognized the profound damage inflicted on the Libyan people through the colonial wars and made a commitment to pay compensation of five billion dollars over the following twenty years. Following a long legal controversy, Great Britain admitted in 2013 that systematic torture was inflicted on various Kenyan peoples during the repression of the Mau movement and announced that compensation of twenty-three million pounds would be paid for a total of 5,228 recognized victims. For its part, the German state has recently acknowledged its moral responsibility for the genocide committed against the Herero and Nama peoples between 1904 and 1908. As usually happens, the first expiatory act in the summer of 2018 consisted of the return to their descendants of various remains of human origin—skeletons, fetuses, skulls, skins, etc.—kept in German institutions. Even Belgium, a country that resisted any kind of revision of its colonial responsibility in Central Africa until recently, has just taken its first step in the opposite direction.⁴

No one imagines that the eventual reparation agreements will be reached without tensions or resistance. But nor does it seem possible to sustain for much longer the illusion that colonialism constitutes a mere footnote in the history of the old European countries, an accident that passes unnoticed in the flow of a narrative still replete with exceptionalism and self-complacency, even today. The mark that centuries of colonial domination has

1 Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics," November 25, 2020, <http://restitutionreport2018.com>, 1.

2 "En Algérie, Macron qualifie la colonisation de « crime contre l'humanité », tollé à droite," *Le Monde*, November 25, 2019, https://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/02/15/macron-qualifie-la-colonisation-de-crime-contre-l-humanite-tolle-a-droite-et-au-front-national_5080331_4854003.html.

3 Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Sandrine Lémaire, *La fracture coloniale* (Paris, La Découverte, 2005).

4 In April of 2020, the Belgian Prime Minister, Charles Michel, publicly apologised on behalf of the federal government for the kidnapping and deportation to Belgium of thousands of mixed-race children from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi between 1958 and 1962, and whose existence contravened the laws of segregation in force under the Belgian occupation.

left on institutions representative of the old countries, such as the army, hospitals, chambers of commerce, and, naturally, the museums, cannot continue to be regarded as something natural that spontaneously emanated from European genius. This might be one of the effects of the advent of what Annette Wieviorka has called the “era of the witness.”⁵ Once the bolts that locked memory in the field of a non-transferable subjectivity have been loosened, the moral and epistemological value attained by witnesses can challenge the solidity of official narratives fueled by the states that have inherited the colonial privileges. Thus, the potential contained in the countless testimonies that confirm colonial barbarism in all its manifestations is inexorably released, forcing European societies to accommodate as best as they can these uncomfortable and disturbing figures, which now populate the landscapes of recent memory.

Enzo Traverso has recently pointed out that the contemporary obsession with the past, which has turned memory worship into a veritable European civil religion, is the result of the crisis in utopian expectations that, until recently, had focused our attention on the future.⁶ With hopes of a redemptive future dashed, European societies are now instead obsessed with scrutinizing their own past, in search of references that might satisfy a certain sense of community. The appearance of memory in the public sphere may well be the product of melancholy, but the fact is that neither societies nor their institutions, which include museums, can maintain for much longer the silence which protects the old, civilizing fantasies, that carefully studied amnesia, consisting of ignoring the evidence and basing institutional discourse on ever more flagrant omissions. To paraphrase Marx, the tragedy concealed in the past now appears as a farce.⁷

In Spain, at least until now, collective recognition of the horrors of colonialism and its consequences for the present has come in small doses. In fact, denunciation of those atrocities provokes deep suspicion, as they are recorded in a local register

5 Annette Wieviorka, *L'ère du témoin* (Paris: Plon, 1998).

6 Enzo Traverso, *Melancolía de izquierda* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2019), 37.

7 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1985).

that adds a new and unexpected complexity to their meaning. A well-known case is the stuffed body of the Bushman hunter—in reality, a “Hottentot” from the Cape region—which was on display at the Darder Museum until 1997, popularly known as the *Negro of Banyoles*. In 1991, Alphonse Arcelin, a doctor of Haitian origin living in Cambrils (Tarragona), started a campaign to remove the mummy after discovering that it was exhibited in a display case in the Banyoles museum in Girona. The celebration of the Olympic Games in Barcelona the following year led to significant international backing for the campaign, but strong opposition from the people of Banyoles and a notable part of Catalonia’s political and international elites, loath to give in to pressure applied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Madrid. This delayed the mummy’s return until 1997, three years before the repatriation—who knows if it is permanent—of these remains to Botswana.⁸

The vicissitudes that surrounded the Negro of Banyoles’ return to Africa are not an isolated case. To begin with, the Spanish state obviously has its own accounts to settle for the period that gave rise to its imperial glories. Caught up in that hornet’s nest, in 2015 the government of Mariano Rajoy did not miss the opportunity to publicise a law that—withstanding its many incongruities—gave the descendants of the Sephardic Jews expelled in the fifteenth century access to Spanish nationality. Perhaps the prominence given to the main myths of the Conquest has opportunely overshadowed Spain’s modern colonial enterprise in Africa, which began with the Berlin Conference and resulted in a minor empire composed more of enclaves or sanctuaries that, from 1939, were handed over to the victorious troops of the Civil War (Ifni, Sahara and a large part of the northern part of the Spanish protectorate in Morocco), than of extractive colonies (Guinea). Nevertheless, the crude controversy that has arisen

8 For a lucid account of the trials and tribulations suffered by the Negro of Banyoles, see Frank Westerman, *El negro y yo*. (Barcelona, Océano, 2007). Westerman himself has recently pointed out that the remains were returned to Botswana due to a mistake in their identification. See: Miquel Molina Barcelona, “El Negro de Banyoles fue enterrado en un país equivocado,” *La Vanguardia*, November 25, 2019, <https://www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/20190302/46768019743/africa-negro-disecado-taxidermia-banyoles-racismo.html>. <https://www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/20190302/46768019743/africa-negro-disecado-taxidermia-banyoles-racismo.html>.

in recent months over the letter that the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, reportedly sent to Pope Francis and the King of Spain, calling on them to apologize for the outrages committed during the conquest and colonisation of America, just as he was calling for a “shared, public and socialized narrative” of the common past to be drawn up,⁹ represents a very clear sign of the denial comfortably installed in society.

If the contemporary debates on the creation of Spain’s overseas empire continue to be dominated by an ostrich-like policy, and if the exceptionalism doctrine (“*We* colonized well, in contrast to the *other* European empires”) still appears to be hegemonic when judging the colonising endeavours in America,¹⁰ what can we expect when it comes to the modern colonial enterprise, which is practically absent from the secondary education curriculum—and largely from that of higher education too—and which is taboo in public debate? It is not by accident that, in recent years, the only political initiatives that have tried to address the omission surrounding colonialism have come from the Catalan context which, because of its own history, is more sensitive to the ravages caused by what Kipling called “the white man’s burden.” In 2005, the political party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya [ERC, or the “Republican Left”] submitted a proposal to parliament calling on the Spanish state to acknowledge its use of chemical weapons in the Rif war in the 1920s, which was rejected by the votes of the PSCE and PP parties. It is true that there is an exception to this induced amnesia, namely that of the Saharawi people, who have been in exile in the Tindouf “hamada” for over forty years and who, for complex historical reasons, are the subject of broad,

far-reaching solidarity in the Spanish state.¹¹ Nevertheless, aside from the cases mentioned, the only public demonstrations of recognition of responsibility and of solidarity with the victims of Spanish colonialism have taken place in the municipal sphere, a political domain that is less concerned with the affairs of State and, for that reason, more open to initiatives from civil society.

That same head-in-the-sand policy galvanizes the practices of Spanish ethnological museums. Though open to a variety of views on the contemporary world, to public participation, and to an intersection of languages and discourses, these institutions are reticent about revealing the footprints that betray their participation in the colonial legacy, perhaps because they feel that legacy detracts from their symbolic and moral legitimacy to act as a social voice.¹² In terms of pieces from the areas subject to modern colonization (principally Africa), Spanish museums offer modest collections, consistent with the scope of Spain’s colonial empire. This bears little resemblance to the exhaustive ambitions and exclusive aura that surround the collections of other, sister institutions in European states such as Great Britain, France, Germany, or Belgium. Perhaps for the same reason, this is not a question either of collections subsumed in an esthetic register that has integrated them into the field of works of art, regardless of the adjective affixed—first, ethnic, etc.—even if some efforts have been made recently in that direction.¹³ However, despite its modesty and lack of “charm”, the map drawn by the provenance of the bulk of those collections matches, with few exceptions, the limits of the Spanish colonial empire: northern Morocco, the Sahara and Equatorial Guinea. The omission of this glaring

9 “López Obrador pide en su carta al Rey un ‘reconocimiento público’ de agravios y una ceremonia conjunta en 2021,” *Europa Press*, November 25, 2020, <https://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-lopez-obrador-pide-carta-rey-reconocimiento-publico-agravios-ceremonia-conjunta-2021-20190327110911.html>.

10 Javier Rodríguez Marcos, Jesús Ruiz Mantilla, Vargas Llosa: “López Obrador tendría que haberse enviado la carta a sí mismo,” *El País*, November 25, 2020, https://elpais.com/cultura/2019/03/27/actualidad/1553702694_101809.html.

11 Alberto López Bargados, “*Ces orgueilleux seigneurs du désert saharien. Images coloniales et postcoloniales des sahraouis en Espagne*,” *Annuaire de l’Afrique du Nord*, no. 39 (2001): 363–378 and Alberto López Bargados, “Le Sahara face à son miroir: poétiques du point mort,” *Cahiers d’EMAM*, no. 24 (2015): 1–13.

12 The narrative omissions surrounding colonialism do not only affect the “African collections” in Spanish museums. See, for example, the thoughts on the Museum of America in Madrid by Marisa González de Oleaga and Fernando Monge: Marisa González de Oleaga, Fernando Monge “El museo de América: modelo para armar,” *Historia y Política*, no. 18 (2007): 273–293.

13 More specifically, the Museum of World Cultures was created in Barcelona in 2015 with a permanent exhibition of objects from the five continents displayed with clearly aesthetic intentions.

fact, its deliberate irrelevance, has only been possible over the decades by means of what is elsewhere called “museographies of dissimulation.”¹⁴ Thus, for some time, the institutions have passed over these coincidences with the argument that these acquisitions were the result of legitimate purchases, and not the fruits of plunder in the course of military campaigns. However, this argument was already refuted by Cicero, who recalled that the act of purchase cannot demonstrate its morality if the seller, an inhabitant of a conquered country, does not have the full freedom to decide whether or not they want to keep that legacy for their descendants.¹⁵ In a situation of objective inequality, pressured by the capitulation of their government, the misery which a defeat plunges them into and the various constraints to which the colonial regime then submits them, it is logical to question the legitimacy of the commercial dealings between the owner of an asset and a trader from the colonizing country who desires that asset. Ultimately, whether it forms part of the spoils of war or the result of a scientific expedition organized to increase the country’s museum collections, the acquisition and conservation of those objects turns those cultural institutions into “heirs of an asymmetrical history.”¹⁶

At this point, it should be clear that collections with a colonial origin are, by their very nature, “historically sensitive.” In other words, their acquisition frequently implies the use of force or coercion to varying degrees, in contexts of dependence or subordination, and that exhibiting them served—and still does in too many cases—to justify and tacitly disseminate racist, discriminatory ideologies.¹⁷ Denouncing those dissimulation logics and omissions that foster both self-deception and self-complacency is a duty for those who, like the team that makes up *Barcelona, Colonial Metropolis*

14 Alberto López Bargados, “Museografías del disimulo: el legado colonial y la memoria de Barcelona como metrópoli imperial,” *Quaderns-e*, no. 21 (2017): 188–192.

15 Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, “The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Towards a New Relational Ethics,” 2018, 8.

16 Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, “The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Towards a New Relational Ethics,” 2018, 4.

17 “Guidelines on Dealing with Collections from Colonial Contexts,” German Museums Association, Berlin, (2018), 9, November 29, 2020, <https://www.museumsbund.de/publikationen/guidelines-on-dealing-with-collections-from-colonial-contexts-2/>.

[hereinafter “BCM”], want to revisit a recent past of domination and settle some scores with the hope that this will, in one way or another, have an impact on the present. Since 2009, the BCM team of anthropologists (Andrés Antebi and Alberto López Bargados) and historians (Pablo González Morandi and Eloy Martín Corrales) has sought to open up a space for reflection and criticism around a colonial project that has largely been forgotten or reduced to a few footnotes in the contemporary history of the Spanish state. The goal we have set ourselves throughout the last ten years has been to participate in developing what can be considered simply as some “counter-memories” of colonialism, namely, in giving shape to and disseminating narratives that produce a crack in the official memory and in the cognitive frameworks that have become dominant because of, among other things, the ongoing support they have received from the public authorities. Those frameworks, which are of varying scale and scope and, in a way, antagonistic, as they appeal to two distinct “demos”—the Spanish and the Catalan—nevertheless interact in the colonial field to play, once combined, a decisive role in shaping the omissions which affect that field. The former, permanently inscribed in that amnesic intellectual horizon called the “transition culture,” associates the colonial enterprise with the imperial dreams of Francoism and, given the establishment of a sort of ontological conclusion to that regime under the 1978 Constitution, absolves the subsequent democratic system of all responsibility for the colonial atrocities committed in the name of a regime with which it would maintain no more than an accidental link. The latter, on the other hand, which constitutes one of the ideological foundations of Catalanism, dominant in Catalonia at least since 1980, presupposes that Catalan society only participated indirectly in the Spanish colonial enterprise, forced to do so by the circumstances that derived from the long night of Francoism, and that in any case, the Spanish state and society, the sole heirs of the colonial empire, had to assume responsibility for it.

As we have just pointed out, however much these two frameworks are presented as antithetical, they combined their forces in the colonial field and provided all kinds of excuses to justify a solipsist narrative of Spanish (and Catalan) democracy, as well as the consequent

marginalization of the memories of organizations, associations and groups of veterans from the colonies, who have tried, largely in vain, to highlight their own narratives.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the intersection of these two frameworks in the colonial field is partial and, so to speak, unfinished; as a result, their collision generates discursive paradoxes and unexpected contradictions when different kinds of symbols are superimposed, arguments that lead nowhere and tend to undermine the absolute confidence conveyed by the official memories. Thus, in the area where two narratives, both dominant in their own sphere, merge, there are “occurrences” that are difficult to explain: tropical wildlife conservation centers based in the heart of the Guinean jungle which, in reality, are international factories for exporting species in danger of extinction and material goods of the native peoples; veteran soldiers who fought to safeguard Spanish sovereignty over African outposts, who stand to attention when they hear the military anthems of their former units and who return to those enclaves years later to hoist the Catalan “Senyera”; large companies that now ascribe to the pro-sovereignty credo with the same enthusiasm that they expressed for the principles of the Francoist “Movimiento” before; demands by former colonial subjects for the citizenship rights they were robbed of, and which would make those fighting today to renounce those same rights in the name of self-determination blush; and, above all, institutions that turn their back on their own past, which they conceal for themselves and, by extension, for those people who visit them in search of the pleasure of knowledge, however painful that might prove to be.

The confusion caused by the deconstruction of those official memories of colonialism is made very clear in the two exhibitions that the BCM has organized to date, both in the temporary exhibition hall in the Barcelona Museum of World Cultures. The commitment to the BCM projects demonstrated from the outset by the Museum of World Cultures, following its effective integration with the Ethnological Museum in 2016 to form a single, municipally owned institution, was neither easy nor comfortable. Institutions are subject to powerful inertias and coercing them to join and engage in

a new trend constitutes an act of determination. The first of those exhibitions, inaugurated in the same year, 2016, titled “Ikunde.” Barcelona Colonial Metropolis, restricted itself to reviewing the origin of the Guinean collections at the Ethnological Museum, founded in 1949 as the Ethnological and Colonial Museum, and the close relationship that the ethnographic missions to what was then Spanish Guinea maintained with a wildlife conservation center opened by the Barcelona City Council in the continental region of the colony in 1959. Spanish Guinea (currently Equatorial Guinea), a small tropical colony formed by the River Muni on the mainland and Bioko Island, saw a Spanish presence from the end of the 18th century on, but this was only formalised with the founding of the colony in 1900, a status it would maintain until it achieved independence in 1968. For years, the center established in Ikunde (on the outskirts of Bata) by the primatologist Jordi Sabater Pi supplied Barcelona with native specimens, including the famous albino gorilla that became an icon of pre-Olympic Barcelona, “Snowflake.” By combining them on the conceptual and exhibition plane, Ikunde highlighted the coincidences that exist between capturing wild animals, taking instant photographs and acquiring objects of ethnological or artistic value to propose a broader view of colonial plunder and its contours. At the same time, “Ikunde” restored the central position occupied by Barcelona, and Catalan society as a whole, in the Guinean colonial adventure, where the commercial bourgeoisie from the Principality monopolized the extractive practices linked to the exploitation of native cacao, wood and wildlife¹⁹. “Snowflake,” who embodied the friendliest and most cosmopolitan ideals of a big city aspiring to become a global tourist hub, in reality constituted an open door to a veiled history of unpunished appropriations carried out in the name of science. To a certain extent, “Ikunde” showed how a victim of colonial plunder became a privileged item of Barcelona merchandising. In the colonial carnival, Snowflake was one of its most photogenic symbols.

18 Alberto López Bargados, “Memòries d’una mili a les colònies,” *Ifni, la mili africana dels catalans*, Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona (2019), 61–87.

19 A. Antebi, P. González Morandi, A. López Bargados, E. Martín Corrales, *Ikunde. Barcelona, metròpoli colonial*, Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017.

We think it is important to stress that, at BCM, we are not interested in defining colonialism as an immanent reality, as an oil stain that impregnates everything, but rather in tracing the specific marks which that colonial legacy has left on our institutions and recognising the affinities, even minor ones, that we find between the policies adopted during the time of the colony and those that are formulated today. Our intention is to focus attention on the details instead of making grandiose statements about the intrinsic evil of colonialism which, by now, are self-evident. We do not wish to engage in an abstract theory of the legacy of colonialism, something that Bayart and Bertrand denounced years ago, but rather reveal the possible lines of continuity that unite colonial and post-colonial experience, without assuming that such a continuity constitutes a universal axiom.²⁰ We believe that the second exhibition we organized, which opened in 2018 and was also held at the Museum of World Cultures, satisfies that objective. It explores the private memories of Catalan conscripts sent to do their military service in the small enclave of Sidi Ifni, on Morocco's southern coast. Once the Spanish Civil War finished, Ifni, a poor colony founded in 1934, became a private preserve of the victorious troops, a destination for promoting and giving free reign to the imperial dreams of the Francoist regime. Despite the regime's propaganda, which insisted on the brotherhood achieved between the Spanish people and their Arab neighbours, the enclave faced a war of liberation between 1957 and 1958, following which Spanish sovereignty was reduced to the city of Sidi Ifni, which would definitively be returned to Morocco in 1969. In that context, the young men sent to do their military service in 1957 were immediately immersed in an armed conflict to defend the Spanish enclave from what was for them a completely unexpected enemy. And those who continued to arrive in that coastal garrison to do their "mili" after the end of hostilities in May 1958 did so in a context dominated by the tension of an unresolved conflict; in most cases, they were sent to the line of blockhouses and trenches that protected the border.²¹

20 Jean-François Bayart, Romain Bertrand, "De quel «legs colonial» parle-t-on?," *en Esprit* (December 2006): 134–160, 144.

21 A. Antebi, P. González Morandi, A. López Bargados, E. Martín Corrales, *Ifni, la mili africana des catalans*, Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019.

The Ifni veterans still get together periodically, and even organize annual commemorative trips to the old enclave, a veritable tourism of colonial memory. The marginalization of their collective memory exemplifies the phenomenal induced amnesia regarding that episode at the hands of the Spanish authorities. The veterans have sponsored a legislative initiative to grant them the status of war veterans, with the corresponding allowances and compensation; however, they had to wait until 2007 before receiving a minimum of public recognition for what they had suffered in the name of the state. So far, however, this has not resulted in anything other than a purely symbolic form of compensation.²² Obviously, this is not the best time for tributes to veterans of a colonial war, but it is equally obvious that dragging out the administrative procedures in the hope that the claimants will gradually die off, one after the other, constitutes a particularly perverse form of cynicism. It is our impression that this cynicism represents a distinctive type of response that the State customarily offers to those who demand the right to be remembered.

In the immediate future, BMC is planning a new project, which this time focuses on the northern part of the Spanish protectorate in Morocco, which became independent in March 1956. Once again, the significant collections treasured by the Barcelona Ethnological Museum are a vital element of the project, especially the expeditions that the museum organized to the protectorate in 1952 and 1954, when it was still under Spanish rule. In this case too, the amnesia is deafening. Clearly the recent tragic history of the Rif region, which so far has culminated in the civil revolt of 2016 and 2017, is to a large extent the result of the devastation produced by the Spanish occupation, which in its modern version began during what Spain calls the African War (1859–1860). We readily tend to overlook the fact that one of the demands that mobilised the Rif population in 2015 was precisely for a cancer hospital to deal with the high incidence of cancerous tumours in the region, which have been attributed to an environmental toxicity that dates back to Spanish bombardments, using mustard gas, of Riffian

22 Final Provision Nine of Act 39/2007, November 19, on the military career.

fields and villages in the 1920s.²³ The list is much longer, though. How can we ignore the decisive role played by the conscription of Catalan soldiers in the war in Morocco in the outbreak of Barcelona's so-called "Tragic Week" in 1909? How can we gauge the impact of the figure of Abd el-Krim el-Khattabi and the Rif Republic on the birth of pan-Arab ideologies? To what extent was the Spanish Civil War merely the transfer of the colonial warfare model to a metropolitan context by rebel Africanist army officers? What role should we reserve for the indigenous troops, such as the Groups of Rif and Ifni Rifles in the Francoist victory in 1939? Whichever perspectives are adopted, the histories of Morocco and Spain, especially throughout the twentieth century, share a tremendous amount of common ground. It is therefore tempting to conclude that "morofobia" [Moor phobia], so firmly ingrained in the Hispanic imagination, is at the root of the hatred and contempt targeted at the Moroccans who have opted to settle in Spain in recent decades, of (once again) cynical immigration legislation and, why not, of the portrayals that tend to portray the Muslim religion as a threat to community harmony. But let us focus on the details. Examining the history of ethnological expeditions to colonial Morocco, retracing the routes so carefully described in the inventories, inquiring about the group of intermediaries who dealt with the leader of the expeditions and the Museum's first director, opens a veritable can of worms. As usually occurs when intellectual adventures pursue the restitution of a certain sense of justice, even when it is deferred, and when they create a space not envisaged for denunciations, you know where it starts, but not where it will end.

23 Layla Martínez, "Antes muertos que humillados!. Un año de lucha en el Rif," November 29, 2020, <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/observatorio-arabe/antes-muertos-que-humillados-un-ano-de-lucha-en-el-rif>. On Spanish bombardments of the Rif, see: Sebastian Balfour, *Abrazo mortal. De la guerra colonial a la Guerra Civil en España y Marruecos (1909-1939)*, (Barcelona: Península, 2002). You can also consult *Arrash*, a documentary by Tarik El Idrissi and Javier Rada (2009), with a Creative Commons licence.