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UNH Global

Julia Rodriguez

Associate Professor, History (COLA) ~ Spain and France

In July 2018 I was able to travel to Salamanca, Spain and Paris, France to attend the 56th meeting of the International Congress of Americanists and to complete archival research for my book project, *Cultural Conquistadors: Nineteenth Century Anthropology and the Scientific Reconquest of the Americas*.

At the ICA meeting, I presented a paper and was also the co-organizer, together with anthropologist Carmen Martínez-Novo of the University of Kentucky, of two linked panels on the topic of “Resurgent Racism: Perspectives from History and Anthropology.”

Next, in Paris for a week of archival research, I visited two archives: the *Bibliothèque Centrale du Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle*, which holds all the records of the ethnographic museums in Paris; and the *Archives Nationales de France*, which holds government correspondence regarding early Americanist activities, such as conferences and scientific expeditions. I was able to take digital photographs of hundreds of documents at both archives. The items I found, including institutional records, anthropologists’



Archives Nationales de France in Paris

professional notes, and correspondence, are crucial to my discussion of the French role in Americanist anthropology, especially since they dominated the field in its founding decades.

Also while in Paris, I visited two key museums related to my book project. First, I visited the *Musée de l'Homme* (Museum of Man), previously known as the “Trocadero” museum due to its location in Paris. The MH had extensive exhibits about its own history and the history of racial science in France. I also observed current exhibits, for example on recent Neanderthal discoveries, which were placed in historical context as well, to my pleasant surprise.

Finally, I visited the prominent *Musée de Quai Branly*, the city’s museum dedicated to ethnographic art. Interestingly, this museum is also named for its location, but for a different reason. At its opening in 2006, museum officials were somewhat sensitive to the history of problematic representation of “primitive” art in the context of racist ideologies. So rather than call the collection “colonial art” (as it may have been called in previous decades), they opted to name it after its street address. Nonetheless, in my opinion there are still problematic aspects to the museum’s overall organization, despite the impressive beauty of the objects.¹

With new archival material in hand as well as extensive notes from the ICA meeting, I am much better grounded in the French historical context of Americanist science. Thanks to the Global Education Center for enabling me to gather this crucial material that is essential to completing my book project.



¹For a detailed account of the MQB’s history, see Sally Price, *Paris Primitive: Jacques Chirac’s Museum on the Quai Branly* (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

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