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260 pags.

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Kimberle López examines a fascinating sub corpus of the New Latin American Historical Novel, a category said to begin with Carlos Fuentes' *Terra Nostra* in 1975 and culminate around the 1992 Quincentenary. These novels represent the earliest encounters between Europeans and Americans while problematizing history itself, through their use of irony, exaggeration, anachronism, metafiction, and intertextuality. In contrast to "romantic indigenism" of the nineteenth century, the New Latin American Historical Novels tend to critique the colonial project from within. The five novels López discusses take marginal perspectives from within the conqueror's view and focus upon how conquistadors themselves were marginal members of Iberian society.

López frames this narrative strategy of identifying with a marginal conquistador or "Other Within" the imperial project as an effort to understand Latin American identity at the end of the 20th century and come to terms with its double heritage resulting from a violent conquest. These books identify with Europe, but not with the conquest, which they critique from these marginal perspectives.

López uses psychoanalysis and theories of Self and Other in the colonial context, particularly Robert Young's "colonial desire." These marginal conquistadors feel a simultaneous attraction and repulsion toward the American Other in relation to whom they define themselves. They all undergo transculturation, coming to identify in different ways with the Other, but at the same time they are afflicted with extreme ambivalence about their feelings of identification. López coins the term "anxiety of identification" to refer to the panic and fear these characters feel at almost "losing their ego boundaries." This study highlights the theme of transculturation colored by colonial desire and anxiety of identification.

In Chapter 1, "Loving Cannibalism: Cannibalism and Colonial Desire in Juan José Saer's *El entenado*" López shows that the anonymous narrator - a 15 year old cabin boy who is the only survivor of Juan Díaz de Solís 1516 expedition to the Río de la Plata - feels a mixture of desire and fear toward the annual cannibalistic rituals of the native community he



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Novels of the Conquest**

Reinventing the New World

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lives with for 10 years. His ambivalence is mirrored in the natives' own ambivalence toward the flesh they consume. In "Violence and the Sacred: Idolatry and Human Sacrifice in Homero Aridji's *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo*," the second chapter, López highlights how the fictional conquistador Gonzalo Dávila is fascinated and terrified by indigenous sacrificial rites to the point of "going native" and eventually taking the role of the sacrificed victim. López observes that the cruelty and contempt he exhibits while appropriating native rituals is "a defense mechanism against excessive identification with the Other" and that the "competing attraction and repulsion of colonial desire serve to deconstruct the rhetoric of a conquest that is theoretically based on the unqualified dominion of the Other" (93).

The third chapter, "Eros and Colonization: Homosocial Colonial Desire in Herminio Martínez's *Diario maldito de Nuño de Guzmán*," contends that the first-person narrator, portrayed as a homophobic

sadist obsessed with the persecution of sodomites but also tempted by homoerotic desire, embodies the contradictions of conquest: "rather than a conquest that unequivocally genders the colonizer masculine and the colonized feminine, the homosocial colonial desire of *Diario* presents a more complex and contradictory picture that deconstructs the gendered rhetoric of conquest" (113). In Chapter 4, "Colonial Desire for the Amerindian and Converso Other in Abel Posse's *El largo atardecer del caminante*", a fictionalized Cabeza de Vaca looking back to his decade-long wanderings among nomadic tribes in North America shows ambivalence toward his Amerindian wife and later his crypto-Jewish lover. López argues that his vacillation between desire and rejection "serves as a means of exploring the origins of transculturation" (117).

In Chapter 5, "Ambivalence toward Converso Self and Conquered Other in Homero Aridjis's *1492* and *Memorias del Nuevo Mundo*," pícaro figure, Juan Cabezón, has mixed feelings about his own converso identity. Both in *1492*, in which he wanders Spain in the years before the Expulsion of the Jews and in the sequel, in which he travels to the new world on Columbus's first voyage and takes part in conquest of Mexico with Hernán Cortez, Juan Cabezón alternately accepts and rejects identification with his Jewish roots. In America, his ambiguous attitude is extended to his response to the violence of the conquest. He tries to fashion himself as someone who abhors violence, but his passive acquiescence gradually grows into active participation.

The final chapter is the most provocative because López ventures a reading of what the representation of this ambivalence is meant to suggest. She argues that his hypocritical behavior in contrast to the valor of other characters—crypto Jews and conversos he abandons to the Inquisition—"makes it clear that the reader is not supposed to identify with this waffling antihero" (154). In America, it is revealed, Juan de Ca-

bezón "is not the 'conscientious objector' that the reader might want him to be" (172). By taking into account what the reader is supposed to think or want, López can venture a reading of what the book is doing in the present and doing in history. Juan Cabezón tries to frame himself as innocent anticonquistador, but the representation of his ambivalence shows, according to López, that it is not possible to participate in conquest without dirtying one's hands.

López's detailed study demonstrates that all these books are concerned with ambivalent feelings of attraction and repulsion and that psychoanalytic principles and postcolonial theories of the Other can productively guide analyses. However, the manner in which they might address the particularity of present political situations is a question López brackets as interesting and worthy of further study. In this sense *Reinventing the New World* extends the invitation to put to work the psychoanalytical tools López has laid out. In this timely book, she opens space to ask: What beliefs in the present are affirmed by the representations of "colonial desire" and "anxiety of identification"? Especially when many of the same old stereotypes of the Other are used in these books to elaborate their selfsame deconstruction of stereotypes. How does "pointing to the gaps and contradictions in the imperial enterprise" (177) actually function in each work to deconstruct the rhetoric of conquest? Is showing a more nuanced and complex picture of the conquest the same as "deconstructing" its rhetoric? López stops short of saying how this deconstruction is accomplished because she does not address questions of meaning or the specificities of the contexts in which these works were produced. However she does elaborate how late twentieth century Latin American authors portray their origins in difference. They say: just as the indigenous peoples of Latin America were not one homogenous, monolithic group, neither were the Europeans.