49th Parallel An Interdisciplinary Journal of North American Studies

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Emma Pérez. The Decolonial Imaginary: Writing Chicanas into History.
(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. 160 pp.)

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For those scholars struggling to write postnationalist histories, Emma Pérez's The Decolonial Imaginary will be a welcome challenge to linear narratives - in this instance, linear narratives of Chicana/o history. In her brief yet dense work, Pérez calls on historians, particularly Chicano/a historians, to move beyond writing histories that respond to, and are consequently bounded by, traditional categories of historiography. To overcome the limitations of colonizing discourses, according to Pérez, we must be bold enough to create new ways of writing our stories. This will bring us to new ways of conceiving history, a "decolonial imaginary," where we are able to imagine our own future, on our own terms, with ourselves as subjects. In The Decolonial Imaginary, Pérez models one strategy toward achieving this goal. Pérez divides her work into three differently structured parts. In Part One, she maps out Chicano/a historiography and assesses its challenges to colonial domination. In Part Two, she excavates and analyzes genealogies of twentieth-century Chicana social practices, and in Part Three, she relies on Freudian theories of Oedipus, as well as Foucault's method of genealogy, to demonstrate how a "colonial imaginary" continues to frame and delimit patriarchal Chicano nationalism.

In her historiography of Chicano scholarship, Pérez both critiques the cannon and places herself within it. Looking to the early scholarship of the twentieth century, she argues that writers such as George I. Sánchez and Carlos Castañeda articulated oppositional histories even while working within traditional frameworks. It was not until the works of Rodolfo Acuña and Gloria Anzaldúa, however, that Chicana/o scholarship was able to break away from traditional models of "sameness" that erase differences, or that mirror Euroamerican histories. In mapping out the road to Acuña and Anzaldúa, Pérez clearly places herself in the next wave, part of a generation of scholars who will lead the way to postcolonial histories, Chicana/o histories that construct Chicanos/as as subject, and create new ways of knowing.

In Part Two of her work, Pérez writes stories. Moving from the Feminist Congresses sponsored by the Yucatecan state government during the Mexican Revolution, to the anarchosyndicalist Partido Liberal Mexicano in Los Angeles, to early twentieth-century women's clubs in Tejas, Pérez excavates and analyzes Chicana feminist voices in the interstices of nationalist movements. It is here that the limits of writing history in/of the interstices of any movement or nation become apparent. While Pérez is successful in unearthing feminist voices, including a bold challenge to Euroamerican racism by the young women of Club Femenino Chapultepec, the swift and negative reaction of local communities and governments to the voices she discusses reveal that such agency is often very limited. This, of course, is a caveat for scholars of the "third space" in general. The interstices, or the "third space" of which Pérez and others write, can be places of empowerment, and it is critical for historians to acknowledge those spaces in constructing a postcolonial, or decolonial future. At the same time, there is a risk of

romanticizing these same places, or in overestimating the amount of agency available to those whose only recourse is a third space.

Finally, Pérez's closing section is a call to action. Here she moves away from more traditional histories to map the colonial stories of four "cultural bodies": La Malinche, Silent Tongue, Delgadina, and Selena. It is Selena, she argues, who is able to construct herself deliberately as desiring subject, and thus provide an option and a model of sexual empowerment for other young Chicanas. Yet Pérez does not end on this positive note, but instead with a word of warning. Making use of Freud's Oedipus Complex, she argues that Chicano Scholarship continues to be shaped by an "Oedipal Conquest Complex" where Hernando Cortés is the father, Malintzin Tenepal the mother, and Octavio Paz the estranged son. Paz, and others like him, cannot come to terms with Malinche, and so she "becomes the dreaded phallic mother who will devour him, castrate him, usurp him of his own phallus/power." It is this drive away from the violated mother, and consequent ambivalent embracing of the colonial father, which also pushes patriarchal Chicano nationalism to denigrate and reject feminism. The challenge to the Chicano/a activism and scholarship then comes from within and without. We must contend both with the colonial imaginary of the dominant society and with its imprint upon our own bodies and scholarship. For Pérez, one means to meet these challenges is Chicana feminism. And she concludes her monograph with the assertion that "Ultimately, the point is to move beyond colonialist history by implementing the decolonial imaginary with a third space feminist critique to arrive finally at postcoloniality, where postnational identities may surface."

While critics of Freud may reject Pérez's "Oedipal Conquest Complex," her argument for new ways of writing, teaching, and knowing outside of the colonial imaginary has poignancy for the twenty-first century. Like Prasenjit Duara's Rescuing History From the Nation, The Decolonial Imaginary will require scholars to reconsider the very process of writing history. As yet another generation of historians comes of age, we will be looking to works such as these to construct new ways of knowing.