

"...luego vinieron gente desnuda...este rey y todos los otras andaban desnudos como sus madres los parieron, y asi las mujeres sin algun empacho..."

Cristobal Colon
Diarios, Octubre 12, 1492

"The history of the world is made up of conquests and defeats, of colonizations and discoveries of others, but the "discovery" of America is what announces and founds our present identity."

Tzvetan Todorov
The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other, 1982"

In recent years, as progressive historians have increasingly articulated the horrors of colonization, a larger picture of the European conquest of the Americas has emerged. As a result, the arrival of 1992 has prompted as much reconsideration as commemoration, as much cultural soul searching as celebration. Yet, as Verena Stolke has noted, we still tend to view this conquest in monolithic terms, as the suppression and dispossession of one group of men (Native Americans) by another (Spaniards), thereby obscuring its complex cultural and ideological legacies. While such totalizing conceptions of oppression can be useful - by fueling emerging movements of resistance for whom self-questioning is an untimely luxury - ultimately, they are confining and deceptive, and, themselves exclusive and oppressive. Not only do such monolithic conceptions obscure a counter-history of individual and communal resistance to colonial domination, but they eclipse whole other areas of cultural domination and denial, those of class, gender, and desire.

Disorient is not only about a remote and distant past, about them, then. It is also about us, now.