

Introduction:

“Reimagining the Americas”

In this issue we present four essays which address fiction and non-fiction writers' take on reimagining the Americas, and reframing notions of postcoloniality in relation to the Americas. Silvia Nagy-Zekmi's essay on "The Postcolonial Debate in Latin America" argues that postcolonial discourse does, indeed, apply to Latin America, not only the Anglophone and Francophone world; and she, further, notes that postcolonial textual production was pioneered in Latin America not in the West during the decolonization era after WWII. To support her thesis Nagy-Zekmi begins with Fray Ramon Pane's 15th century account of "the earliest resistance to the Spanish colonial enterprise by the natives of Hispanola," and goes on to discuss the validity of regarding many other texts as postcolonial: Jose Marti's *Nuestra America* (1891), Fernando Ortiz's *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azucar* (1940) and Roberto Fernando Retamar's *Caliban* (1971) to name a few. Coincidentally, Cesar Valverde's essay on "Failed Manhood" supports Nagy-Zekmi's idea of postcoloniality by comparing two texts, Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno* (1855) and Alejo Carpentier's *The Kingdom of This World* (1943), both indictments of slavery, "colonial decadence" and "racist ideological apparatus." By reexamining slavery as hemispheric, Valverde argues that the production of the "other" as "failed models of masculinity" is best examined in its "fullest literary representation," i.e., in transnational terms.

In "Latino U.S.A." Elena Machado Saez examines the work of Rosario Ferre, particularly *The House on the Lagoon*, to argue that Ferre reimagines and identifies Puerto Rico as part of a U.S. - Latino population, which corresponds to Ferre's own political reversal – from supporting independence to now statehood. Ferre equally sees her own work as part of the U.S. literary canon and Puerto Rican history (as of 1898) as part of U.S. history. Hence, *The House on the Lagoon* plots the history of Puerto Rico as indivisible from the island's relationship with the U.S.A. This statehood aesthetic is achieved through the metaphor of marriage in the text. Finally, Sumita Lall's essay on "Subverting the taste buds" of America argues that Bharati Mukherjee's fictional characters, immigrants and refugees, seek to "find a place in and feel at home in the world" in ways that rely on the global extension of the American Dream and the U.S. Constitution to all its citizens. In addition, Lall stresses that the figures of the migrant in Mukherjee's fiction are only as free as the domestic narratives they access and mobilize. In the novels *Wife* (1975) and *Jasmine* (1989) Lall sees Mukherjee's portrayal of social mobility as "agentic" only to the degree that the characters can successfully deploy the myth of the American nation as an extended family. Mukherjee's fiction, Lall argues, contributes to a reevaluation of the question of agency itself for her character's experiences confirm different nation-states' narratives of home and family.

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