

Invisible, Inaudible, Influential? Reclaiming Latino Life

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ABSTRACT

Even before the first Anglo-American settlers arrived in the New World, there had been a variety of literary and other cultural productions on the North American continent by people of diverse ethnic origin. Likewise, by the mid-sixteenth century, administrative, cultural and educational institutions had been introduced to North America by Spanish explorers, missionaries, and colonists (Kanellos 2). Today roughly one in six people in the United States of America belongs to the group labeled “Latinos” or “Hispanics”, according to the 2010 census.

Despite these facts and figures and despite centuries of Latino traditions and cultural expressions on the American continent and particularly on what is now the U.S. Southwest, the works of Latinos have been looked upon as those of an insignificant minority. In fact, Hispanics are assigned the status of “the Other”. They have been struggling to overcome rejections and stereotypes, striving to be heard and seen so they might be perceived as authentic individuals instead of outsiders or intruders.

The subsequent analysis of Latino literary and other cultural productions will examine the interaction or rather interdependence of visibility, audibility and status. The focus of the study will be on concrete reflections and consequences of those aspects. Being unseen and unheard among others will lead not only to lower self-esteem but it

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also means having a smaller share in contributing to the construction of the historical legacy of Latinos in the United States.

As Latino art is receiving more attention, the power mechanisms in society become more transparent. At the same time, both individual lives and collective identities have a chance to be reassessed in less stereotypical terms.

Keywords: visibility, audibility, status, stereotype, alterity, authentic identity

RESUMEN

Ya antes de llegar los primeros colonizadores angloamericanos al Nuevo Mundo, en Norteamérica vivían personas de los orígenes étnicos más diversos que han legado a la posteridad un sinnúmero de obras literarias y culturales de todo tipo. A mediados del siglo XVI, los exploradores, misioneros y colonizadores españoles habían establecido ya instituciones administrativas, culturales y educativas (Kanellos 2). Según el censo demográfico de 2010, hoy por hoy uno de cada seis habitantes de EE.UU. forma parte del denominado grupo de los “latinos” o “hispanos”.

Obviando estos hechos y cifras, así como las tradiciones y los legados culturales centenarios de los latinos en el continente americano, especialmente en el territorio que conforma el actual sudoeste de los EE.UU., las obras de los latinos han sido relegadas a la categoría de obras de una minoría insignificante. De hecho, los hispanos han obtenido el estatus de “los Otros”. La demanda y reivindicación de los latinos es la de superar el rechazo y los estereotipos, de ser oídos, vistos y contemplados como auténticos individuos y no como marginados o intrusos.

El siguiente análisis de varias obras literarias y culturales estudia el entramado de condiciones de la visibilidad, la audibilidad y el estatus. Las reflexiones y las consecuencias concretas de estos aspectos forman el núcleo central del análisis. No ser vistos ni oídos en una comunidad no sólo menoscaba la autoestima sino que también significa participar en menor medida en la construcción del legado histórico de los latinos en los EE.UU.

A medida que el arte latino recibe mayor atención, también aumenta la transparencia de los mecanismos de poder en la sociedad. Así se ofrece, además, la ocasión de aquilatar de una forma nueva y menos estereotipada tanto las vidas singulares como las identidades colectivas.

Palabras clave: visibilidad, audibilidad, estatus, estereotipo, alteridad, identidad auténtica.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historical records mark Columbus' journeys to America as the beginning of the multinational colonization of the continent. His report to the Spanish crown in 1493 is regarded as the earliest document relating the exploration of the new territories by Europeans (Hebel 76-77). To begin with, Spanish settlers were more successful than French and English explorers and by the mid-16th century, they had not only established settlements in various regions, but also introduced their language, literature, and culture. This included the corresponding institutions of literacy and intellectual production, such as schools, libraries and printing presses (Kanellos 2-5). Consequently, there has been a long tradition of Hispanic life and culture on what is nowadays the U.S. territory.

Modern analyses of those phases of exploration and colonization interpret the historical documents and literary expressions that were sent back to the Old World as carefully constructed projections of European concepts and expectations. Their focus would be on encounters with the exotic or "the Other" as Stephen Greenblatt argues in his 1991 study *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonders of the New World*, to provide but one example.

However, these connections between ideas and intentions can be understood not so much as a singular occurrence but as a common pattern which forms part of the human experience. Generally speaking, a community of people will aim at establishing positive images of themselves and creating a strong feeling of belonging together. These two aims can be reached on the one hand by depicting and presenting one's own group in a most favorable way. On the other hand, it is also common to create negative images of other groups, thus intensifying the feeling of "us" vs. "them". The narrative techniques used to achieve these goals most often include certain key phrases, a simplified view of those cultural others and stereotypical models to represent their very different lifestyles: "The discourses of (national or ethnic) identity and alterity will most often manifest themselves in certain key images and more or less stereotypical concepts and in stories" (Breinig 331).

The subsequent analysis will examine these concepts and images and trace their depictions in literary works, in nonfiction and other cultural productions of Latino artists. The connections and "echoes" of the different voices will be studied as well to point out the effects of invisibility and inaudibility. The analysis will demonstrate that a shift from stereotypical views of Hispanics to a more authentic reassessment may be observed as Latinos and their art and literature are gradually receiving more attention and approval.

2. FOOD AND STEREOTYPES

Cultural “appetizers” may lead to a greater interest in the group connected with the elements one gets in contact with:

But perhaps the element of Mexican culture most prevalent in the United States is its cuisine. Tacos, tostadas, enchiladas, and tamales are on the menus of restaurants and fast food chains in every region of North America. [...] The popularity of Mexican restaurants in the United States has coincidentally introduced Anglos to other elements of Mexican culture (Catalano 73).

The stereotype of “Tío Taco” is the downside of culinary cultural contacts. In fact, it is not unusual to refer to food-related words when trying to put others down. The Latino lifestyle which is often characterized by food preferences Anglo-Americans view as exotic results in names non-Hispanics associate with this cuisine, such as “greaser, pepper belly, frijole guzzler” (Limón 217). These images reverberate in literary expressions as well, such as Gloria Anzaldúa’s piece “We Call Them Greasers” which sets the tone right in the very title of the poem.

Such labels should not be shrugged off since they do not touch only the surface. Culinary preferences, cooking habits and family traditions revolving around meals do not simply serve the purpose of keeping people alive – the importance of these topics in a given society can be measured when examining the amount of time spent in connection with these chores. Sociologists found that in an average North American family, food-related activities take up between a quarter and one half of an individual’s time:

We eat away an important portion of our lives – for the traditional male, a reasonable estimate might be four out of sixteen waking hours are involved in dining and related activities; for the traditional housewife as much as eight of the sixteen hours if we count grocery shopping [sic], cooking and cleaning up (Curry & Jiobu 248).

Likewise, food and its consumption will find their way into society’s traditions and will thus define what it means to be at home, to feel protected and loved, “associating certain foods [...] with the comfort, security, and love of their childhood homes” (Gabaccia 179). In short, the whole complex of cooking, eating as well as the rituals connected with dining and celebrating belong to the focal points in defining both the individual and the collective identity of communities and their members.

Any food-related ethnic stereotype will therefore particularly hit home since it touches the very essence of the other person’s cultural confidence. This is true even if this name-calling sounds very non-committal, like just another thoughtless and meaningless side remark, such as the “taco chokers” (Castro 129).

Coming up with stereotypes that are based on food preferences works both ways –Latinos find ways of expressing that Anglo-Americans seem to be devoid of emotion and always stay at a safe distance: “Morally and culturally they may be regarded as cold, insipid, and sexless– in short, something like cold ham. And, indeed, this food symbol furnishes an image for an early ethnic slur –*jamones* (the ham eaters)– used to name Americans” (Limón 221).

Thus ethnic dishes themselves change their status from being culinary terms to representing a whole culture. Using a typically Mexican ingredient in the title of his novel *The Tortilla Curtain*, T. C. Boyle manages to imply the ongoing conflict relating to the U.S.–Mexico border as well as prejudices, hierarchies, different social conditions and the risk of inequality.

3. UNIFORM OR UNIQUE?

Within the dominant discourse of the USA, Mexico is often cast in the alterity role. This strategy will allow a national North American identity to be created as a contrasting model. The idea as such is based on the concept of having the other party assume the position of a constant, thus reducing any incongruence in one’s own position and defining discrepancies as irrelevant aspects. As a consequence, it seems only logical to define Mexico as a solid and stable system of clear rules, thus asserting one definite standpoint:

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, multiethnic, and multicultural –and increasingly less definable as one specific and linear culture– more and more Americans want to believe in a Mexico of one rigidly defined culture, instead of a complex plurality (Ruy-Sánchez 44).

This assessment of Mexico does not consider only the country or the political system as an abstract entity. Instead this view involves the human factor as much as the economic or political one. In order to keep the concept of one stable image of Mexico intact, any idea of unique individuals must be removed. Coming back to *The Tortilla Curtain*, this concept is clearly illustrated at the very beginning. After hitting a man with his car, Delaney Mossbacher wonders if this man is Mexican or Hispanic because he seems to speak Spanish. Shortly after the accident Delaney follows his original plan of driving to the recycling center to drop off his bundles of newspapers. He realizes with a shock that the men working at the center look exactly like the man he had hit on the road, yet before this incident those men had been almost invisible to him:

He’d been in Los Angeles nearly two years now, and he’d never really thought about it before, but they were everywhere, these men, ubiquitous, silently going

about their business, whether it be mopping up the floors at McDonald's, inverting trash cans in the alley out back of Emilio's or moving purposively behind the rakes and blowers that combed the pristine lawns of Arroyo Blanco Estates twice a week (Boyle 12).

On the one hand, Delaney is not able to distinguish between Latinos of presumably different ethnic and biological origins. To him, each man looks like an identical twin of the one Delaney saw before. This suggests that the men might be robot-like copies or clones, implying that these Hispanic people are not even human. On the other hand, the different situations in which Delaney remembers having noticed "these men" involve hard, physical, dirty work. As he pictures it in his mind, none of them has a professional position like the people in Delaney's close environment, i.e. his family, friends, and neighbors. The image of Hispanic men that is projected in this quote is that of working-class people of homogeneous or strictly speaking uniform outer appearance so as to be almost nondescript. Latinos are thus reduced to a certain class of people, doing the dirty work for the upper classes.

Another idea connected with this particular image of Hispanics is the constant influx of Mexican people due to illegal immigration. Due to the circumstances of the man's sudden appearance and subsequent disappearance among the shrubs next to the roadside after the accident, Delaney concludes that the man he hit must be an illegal immigrant hiding out near a creek. The connection of this one illegal Mexican with the workers Delaney now realizes are hiding "everywhere", clearly illustrates the threat of illegal immigration perceived by the non-Hispanic population of the USA who feel their very existence is endangered.

However, these impressions of a threatening mass of Hispanic people who are so uniform as to be almost invisible are not limited to Anglo-Americans and their ethnic short-sightedness. Clemencia is the protagonist of Sandra Cisneros' short story "Never Marry a Mexican". She is the daughter of a Mexican father and a Chicana mother, yet her logic sounds very similar to Delaney Mossbacher's. In fact, Clemencia has internalized the Anglo-American criteria according to which Latinos remain invisible meaning they are not viewed as other people are seen and moreover, the narrator states that there is a second invisibility threshold which keeps her from considering Latinos as men she might fall in love with:

Mexican men, forget it. For a long time the men clearing off the tables or chopping meat behind the butcher counter or driving the bus I rode to school every day, those weren't men. Not men I considered as potential lovers. Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Chilean, Colombian, Panamanian, Salvadorean, Bolivian, Honduran, Argentine, Dominican, Venezuelan,

Guatemalan, Ecuadorean, Nicaraguan, Peruvian, Costa Rican, Paraguayan, Uruguayan, I don't care. I never saw them (Cisneros 69).

In total, Clemencia names people of 19 different nationalities yet on the surface they seem to share certain important similarities. Consequently, she calls all of them “Mexican” which is a label used as a synonym for denigration. Like Delaney’s statement which illustrates his reduced views, the protagonist in this story mixes ethnic origin with social aspects:

As in (racist) Anglo discourse, Clemencia’s word choice blurs the distinction between race and class: ‘Mexican’ here means busboys, butchers’ assistants, bus drivers –working-class men lumped together under an ethnic label that in actuality designates a class– a class of servers (Wyatt 247).

Looking at the term “Mexican” from the viewpoint of Mexico itself, however, shows a completely different perspective and this word serves as a special signal denoting ambivalence. First of all, Mexico regards the Anglo-American culture as morally corrupt which consequently means that those people who leave for the USA or those Chicanos who view North America as their home live in constant danger of what might be called losing their soul. This idea of an inner distance leads to the concept of two different kinds of “Mexican”, namely those who are authentic or real *Mexicanos* and those who must be judged to be traitors. This label is often given to those people of Mexican heritage whose command of the Spanish language does not come up to the expectations of friends and family in Mexico. Spanish remains an important factor in the process of cultural identification, so Chicanas and Chicanos who appear to be too American and seem to adapt to the Anglo lifestyle are marginalized as *pochos*. Interestingly enough, José Villareal chose this term, *Pocho*, as the title for his 1970 book.

Very often, when Mexicans speak about the USA, they will not explicitly use the official terms *Estados Unidos* or *América* but will simply talk about *el otro lado*, and the “other side” is of course that abominable Other, as perceived by Mexico. The alterity position is designated by the choice of words and comprises a whole culture and the lifestyle of people perceived to be uniformly American.

This Americanness is also a criterion for a hierarchy that places Anglo-Americans above Mexicans due to their lighter skin. This reflects the dominating attitude in the USA:

Another important difference from other immigrant groups today is racial ambiguity and the persistent negative stereotypes attached to being Mexican in America: By official statistics Mexicans and other Latinos are white, black,

Asian, or Native American, but in practice *Latino* and especially *Mexican* serve as quasi-racial terms (López & Stanton-Salazar 59-60).

These factors pose a particular challenge for women since Anglo-American images are in the focus of the mainstream ideal of female beauty. Latinas therefore have to compete with the icon or “white goddess” created by the male gaze (Blea 67). In Cisneros’ short story, the protagonist Clemencia experiences a double bind due to the term “Mexican” which reflects the assessment of self and other in the Mexican and the U.S.-American culture. Clemencia, who claims to not having seen “Mexican” men before, meaning really a variety of Latino men, is confronted with her Anglo lover’s sudden view of her as “Mexican”, in the exact same meaning of “invisible” as she used it before. Of course her lover, Drew, still has the physical ability to see Clemencia, however, he does not consider her worthy to be his wife, so in fact in his particular vision she does not exist in the category of “potential spouse”. This again does not reflect so much Drew’s individual shortcomings but points to certain stereotypes and perceived “truths” in society: “In a way, the Anglo stereotype idealizes the Mexican woman. She is exotic, romantic, desirable; full of vivacity and sexual know-how. But, alas, she is “Mexican”, and marriage to her involves falling into the sin of miscegenation” (Paredes 89). Consequently, any Hispanic woman just like the men described above, who is perceived to belong to the broad category of “somehow Mexican” will be viewed as an object, belonging to a uniform crowd which makes her invisible insofar as she is not noticed as an individual, authentic –let alone marriageable– person.

Coming back to the Mexican understanding of the term “Mexican”, an internal current of racism and classism can be observed. The narrator of Arturo Islas’ *Rain God* explicitly states the rules and worldview of the Angel family. The matriarch of the Angel family, Mama Chona, who is the narrator’s grandmother, consistently denies her own Indian and Mexican ancestry. Those who do not deny their roots, like the working-class Mexican nanny, are consequently seen as ill-educated and exerting a bad influence: “Mama Chona had taught all her children that the Angels were better than the illiterate riff-raff from across the river” (Islas 15). Denial of a major part of one’s own heritage like the character Mama Chona consistently practices it, will lead either to strict hierarchical thinking and pride as it did for Mama Chona – or it will create an inner conflict for those who are not comfortable with this view of self and other. The narrator starts to rebel against this racist or homophobic attitude during his adolescence (Islas 27). Mama Chona is very uncompromising and also surprisingly straightforward in enforcing her value system: “In subtle, persistent ways, family members were taught

that only the Spanish side of their heritage was worth honoring and preserving; the Indian in them was pagan, servile, instinctive rather than intellectual, and was to be suppressed, its existence denied” (Islas 142). As he grows up, the narrator succeeds in defining his own lifestyle without a wholesale rejection of his heritage, while this means a shift away from family traditions and values: “When he says he wants to live, Miguel Chico firmly rejects a worldview that doubly condemns him for being a gay man and of Mexican descent – a transformation where the bildungsroman hero embraces a new sense of self apart from his family” (King 93-94).

To summarize, becoming more visible must start with a vision of self and other, consciously choosing terms that may be expressing negative values in the eyes of others. This is necessary in order to leave the image of the uniform masses behind and insist on being unique. In this connection it must be noted that Mama Chona’s terminology is more detailed than the single category of “Mexican”, yet the effects and the values attached are comparable and they add to the stereotypical assessment of people.

4. I AM VISIBLE, THEREFORE I AM

There are ways to become more visible and leave the position of the Other – yet just as well, there are roads that lead to oblivion as well as means and mechanisms to prevent some people from finding other roads. Coming back to *The Rain God*, when Arturo Islas had finished the manuscript for this novel, it took him several years to find a publisher, after having received “rejection letters that did little to hide their homophobia and racism” (Aldama xi). Islas was a professor of English at Stanford University and personally knew many of the editors in New York. According to his experience they were not willing to notice, let alone publish, Chicano authors (Saldívar 2008: 25). In effect, this means that the established, prestigious publishers have the power to decide whose voices are allowed to be heard.

Likewise, these publishers also decide which image of Latinos will be the most acceptable to a reading public which is seen from a marketing point of view more as a buying public. In the case of Sandra Cisneros, it seems that the book jackets and the image of Latinas projected by the cover art are subject to acceptance by those willing to spend a few dollars for an exotic yet harmless literary excursion: “Although Cisneros’ books are populated with characters who are complex cultural beings, they are marketed according to a more settled and problematic notion of ethnic identity” – this effect being achieved for example by portraying a “Latin-American woman who stands submissively in the desert night. Her tilted head and closed eyes also suggest modesty, demureness,

and purity” (Swanstrom 236). It follows that the way Hispanics may start being visible is strictly limited so non-Hispanics will not feel intimidated. Latinos are not supposed to appear as radical or revolutionary but as soft and smiling, law-abiding yet ethnic citizens. Linking this aspect to the issue of visibility within the literary landscape, there is a conflict between the perspective of being seen and heard at all and the restriction of having to comply with terms set up by some force perceived to be almost omnipotent. Again, it seems to leave Latinos in the margins: “In essence, such a critical focus further perpetuates the idea of Latin American writers as ‘Others,’ rather than the idea of Latin-American or U.S. Latino writers as included within literary culture as a whole” (Swanstrom 241).

This leads to the question whether there are any connections between the concepts of invisibility, inaudibility and influence. In his 2008 collection of influential books, *Promised Land. Thirteen Books that changed America*, Jay Parini closely examines why the documents he chose are so meaningful that they influence the collective memory and mindset of a whole nation. As might be expected, a list of thirteen books will have to omit many good sources and there is not a single Latino work to be found. However, there is an appendix in which Parini provides a list of one hundred more books that changed America. The only Hispanic book is *A Brief Relation of the Destruction of the Indies* by Bartolomé de Las Casas, of 1552. The author briefly states that the *Relation* “has profoundly influenced the way the conquest of the New World has been viewed over the centuries” (Parini 350). There is, however, no close examination of the book or the influence it supposedly exerted. In order to put these additional one hundred important works into perspective, at least a few key facts and the context would have to be provided. In the general mind of Parini’s readers, Latinos and their works will not be in the focus of attention and thus will not seem to be as influential as the others.

In 2012, Stephen Prothero published his study *The American Bible. How our Words Unite, Divide, and Define a Nation*. Of the 38 documents Prothero uses to illustrate his theses, not one is written by a Latino author and neither is there any connection provided to link Hispanics to the documents and ideas. However, ten years before *The American Bible*, Nicolás Kanellos had published *The Anthology of Hispanic Literature of the United States*, providing access also to rarer documents, even if not to all the writing of the last 400 years: “Included are many texts that until now have been hidden from view, even as Hispanic culture in the United States has been hidden in the shadows of history” (Kanellos 2). In the anthology’s 20 chapters Kanellos arranges 155 different literary and other texts not only for readers and scholars to browse through, but also with the intention to reconstruct the “historical legacy of Hispanics” in what is today called the

United States of America (Kanellos 31). The anthology is part of a greater project called “Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage”, whose aim is “to research, preserve, and make accessible the literature created by Hispanics in all areas that came to be part of the United States, from the colonial period up to 1960” and to name but one of the goals of this project, they work to “compile the master bibliography of all works written and published (some 18,000 entries to date)” (Kanellos 30). This compilation might be seen almost as an answer to the observations voiced in the 1990 essay “The Dialectics of Our America” stating that both in-depth material and a comparative approach are needed:

American literary historians (even the newer ones) and critics working on the reconstruction of American literary history characteristically know little in depth about the history, cultures, and discourses of the Americas as a totality. One of the values of a comparative focus is that it permits us to escape, at least to some extent, from the provincialism and limiting set of tacit assumptions that tend to result from perpetual immersion in the study of a single American culture or literature (Saldívar 1990: 63).

This statement underlines the importance of being seen and heard –and also read and critically analyzed– in order to be fully accepted and assessed in a less stereotypical way. Studies and projects like the above-mentioned ones will shift the focus of the public attention from the purely “exotic” and “ethnic” assessment of Latinos to a fuller understanding of the complexity of their literary and cultural heritage.

It might be noted that Latinos are not the only minority group in the United States whose works of literature and cultural performance have received too little attention for a long time, while the field of American Literature changed from representing many voices and different languages to being defined by English only during the course of the past century (Sollors 295). The anthology on multilingual American literature published by Shell and Sollors in July 2000 covers a range of documents in their original language while the “vast body of Spanish-language writing” is also represented (Sollors 298).

Turning the attention to the dialectics of visual arts and performance art, critics claim that Chicana artists tend to use their imagery to represent their view of their individual and collective selves, so that “Chicana visual language expresses cultural identity and solidarity as it consciously positions Chicana artists outside of mainstream postmodern movements” (Black 135). Yolanda López may be regarded as a pioneer artist whose portraits of women as *Virgen de Guadalupe* as well as her numerous other works challenge common stereotypes. Her artwork also receives considerable scholarly attention (cf. Davalos) and consequently this greater visibility leads to a reassessment of Chicana and Chicano identity. According to Kathryn Blackmer Reyes it is the artist’s

intention “to tell those in power that people who have been in the margins have risen up to take their own power” (Hispanic Research).

Starting in the 1990s, the Smithsonian Latino Center directed more attention to Hispanic art and culture and it

ensures that Latino contributions to the arts, sciences, and humanities are highlighted, understood, and advanced through the development and support of public programs, research, museum collections, and educational opportunities [...] Since 1995 this pool has funded over 300 projects across the Institution, providing close to \$20 million for exhibitions, public programs, research, publications, fellowships, and internships (Smithsonian Latino Center).

The visual representation of Latino life ensures that Hispanics become visible and may express themselves in authentic ways. This may be illustrated by the case of the internationally renowned performance artist Guillermo Gómez-Peña. The 2012 Stanford advertisement for his guest performance claimed that his “performance work and 10 books have contributed to the debates on cultural diversity, border culture and US-Mexico relations” (Stanford). Apart from the awards and the Fellowship he received, there is also an entry on Gómez-Peña at the prestigious Annenberg Foundation, presenting art through time, including a 25-minute video on his performance art (Annenberg). Gómez-Peña succeeds in reclaiming authenticity and influence while simply stating the fluidity of borders:

Mexican identity (or better said, the many Mexican identities) can no longer be explained without the experience of “the other side,” and vice versa. As a socio-cultural phenomenon, Los Angeles simply cannot be understood without taking Mexico City –its southernmost neighborhood– into account (Gómez-Peña 178).

Through his artistic and intellectual work he renders the various border identities visible and audible. His work functions like a magnifying glass, bringing a new vision of life and culture onto the stage and into the audience, thus reaching out into society.

5. CONCLUSION

The above analysis of different Latino productions of literature, arts and other cultural works examines the aspects of visibility, audibility and status and their connections. There is a tendency to be confronted with food-related stereotypes which are very persistent. This ties in with the perception of people not as individual and unique human beings but rather as great crowds of uniform, nondistinct masses. The power mechanisms of society are reflected in this approach of Othering those who do not

belong to the dominant group. Yet there are ways to escape this dead-end and in order to gain more influence, it is necessary for Latinos to become more visible, to raise their voice and to reclaim authentic identities. As more works by Latinos are rediscovered and more artists receive critical attention, there is a gradual reassessment of cultural productions, of the cultural heritage they are connected with and of the individual and collective identities they represent.

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