A HISTORICAL VIEW OF US LATINIDAD AND SPANISH AS A HERITAGE LANGUAGE

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Introduction

In this chapter, I review some aspects of early 20th-century latinidad that inform an understanding of contemporary cultural phenomena and Spanish language inquiry in the current era of renewed nationalist sentiment and fervent debate around (im)migration. I first seek to establish the importance of the ‘cultural imaginary’ for studies of Spanish language in the US, and then address three principal phenomena in chronological fashion: (1) the emergence of the concept of ‘Spanish (as) heritage’ in the context of pre-statehood New Mexico during the early 1900s; (2) the construction and (re)production of latinidad in the cultural industries of the 1910s and 1920s—specifically, Hollywood film, New York music and dance, and urban architecture in the Southwest and Florida; and finally, (3) the repercussions of the Great Depression, especially with regards to cultural intervention and (im)migration during the 1930s and 1940s. The purpose of this chapter is not to synthesize or review previously published work on latinidad, but rather to highlight for readers some of the societal trends that brought the cultural construct of latinidad—and Spanish language as an essential feature of it—into the US cultural imaginary during the early 20th century.¹

One garners a real sense of history repeating itself when considering the phenomenological parallelism of the 1920s/1990s and 1930s/2000s, periods when prosperity and a Latin cultural ‘boom’ were subsequently fractured by grave economic and political crises in which explicit Hispanophobia grew rampant. During the decade of the 1990s, a so-called ‘Latin fever’ swept the US: Ricky Martin, Enrique Iglesias, and Shakira topped the Billboard charts with songs partially or completely in Spanish; Jennifer López (‘J. Lo’) rose to stardom with her Hollywood portrayal of popular Tex-Mex singer Selena, whose death was publicly mourned by millions in the US and Mexico; salsa outsold ketchup in US supermarkets for the first time in the nation’s history; and Spanish language programs at schools, colleges, and institutions of higher learning across the country expanded significantly. Of course, Jennifer López was not the first Latina superstar, but rather Dolores Del Río, who rose to Hollywood stardom during the early days of silent film in the 1920s. Born in Mexico in 1905, Del Río was spotted by a Hollywood director at a social gala in Mexico City at the age of 20 and went on to become one of the top ten moneymakers in the industry. Like her, there were many other Hispanic-identified actors who
accrued great fame in early Hollywood film: Myrtle González, Lupe Vélez, Antonio Moreno, and Ramón Novarro, among others. Things ‘Latin’ or ‘Spanish’ were decidedly stylish during the early 20th century, the same era when Argentine tango, Cuban son, and Dominican merengue emerged on the cultural scene in New York, and Spanish-themed architecture appeared in iconic cities such as San Diego, Santa Barbara, Santa Fe, and Miami.

Rather predictably, when the ‘foreign’-accented English of so many of Hollywood’s great silent stars could later be heard in talkies, within the context of the Great Depression, their appeal to producers and audiences quickly waned. The career of Ramón Novarro, who was receiving 1300 fan letters per week and earning roughly a million dollars a year in 1923, met a fate similar to that of Antonio Moreno, Lupe Vélez, and numerous others; by 1937, he had lost imminence in Hollywood and, in later years, received only minor and often typecast roles (Rodríguez 2004). The professional outcome of these prominent public personalities underscores the great vitality of the linguistic dimension of cultural imaginaries, and the primordial role that Spanish language and Hispanic-accented English play in the construction and projection of latinidad in the US context (Lippi-Green 2012). Both Novarro and Vélez were what we today consider heritage speakers of Spanish, having arrived in the US from Mexico at the ages of 14 and 13, respectively. But as much as Hispanic-accented English became a liability for their careers by the 1930s, it is equally true that, nearly six decades later, the lack of Spanish-language fluency was in some ways perceived as a liability for both Selena and J. Lo in their early days of fame (Aparicio 2003; Williams 2005).

Writing in the context of New York City in the 1990s, Ana Celia Zentella described the ‘chiquitafication’ of US Latinos and the varieties of Spanish spoken by them. As she recalled the great impact that the Carmen Miranda-inspired dancing Chiquita Banana Girl had on her as a child during the 1950s, she remarked that:

I had no idea how the Latin bombshell cliché was shaping the expectations that the world outside of my barrio had of my sister and me, daughters of a Mexican father and Puerto Rican mother, but we certainly thought that the number one box-office attraction in the country was having a wonderful life.


Zentella’s widely cited call for an ‘anthropolitical’ approach to the study of Spanish in the US reflects the continuous participation of the cultural imaginary in the forces that shape language and the ideas that we have about it.

**Language and the cultural imaginary**

In basic theoretical terms, cultural imaginaries are important to scholars of language because they give presence—and in a psychological sense, life—to language in society, and to ‘imagined’ communities at a national level. In his seminal work on the emergence of nation-states following the invention of the printing press in Western Europe, Anderson (1983) affirmed that: “all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished not only by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (p. 6). He affirmed that a nation is an imagined political community, imagined because its members “will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). Dawson (1994) defined the ‘cultural imaginary’ as “those vast networks of interlinking discursive themes, images, motifs and narrative forms that are publicly available within a culture
US latinidad, Spanish as heritage language

at any one time, and articulate its psychic and social dimensions” (p. 48). This is certainly the case when imaginaries are made concrete through institutionalized policies and practices, political and commercial discourse, architecture, place names, signage, advertising, literature, theater, music, film and television shows. All of these cultural phenomena serve, semiotically, to create places and to situate language in context at both micro and macro levels. Images and thoughts of places and of characterological figures evoke in our social minds the use of particular languages, dialects or sociolects; likewise, language use may also serve to evoke or establish places and communities psychologically, socially, economically, and politically.

Cultural imaginaries of US latinidad are important and relevant to readers of the present volume in two principal ways. First, patterns of language choice and cross-generational change and shift are, to some extent and in some regards, the product of cultural imaginaries. As Marcontoni (2015) remarked, for many US Latinos, “to promote one's latinidad is to promote the culture itself, and culture is intimately tied to the language in which it is communicated.” He also noted that (cf. Schwartz 2011):

What has been prevalent recently have been videos which showcase the growing community of Latinos who choose not to learn Spanish for one reason or another (and it is a choice) but are frustrated by the expectation of Latinos and whites alike for them to know the language.

A plausible hypothesis would be that if Spanish is imagined as an integral aspect of US culture and society, the population in general might be more likely to accept its use in public life, and the bilingual population in particular may be more likely to speak the language more frequently and across a wider array of settings (cf. Callahan 2009 on language choice in US service encounters). This would constitute a fundamental approach—in addition to the empirical study of language attitudes and perceptions—to accounting for the actual reasons behind language choice and, concomitantly, language shift. Second, cultural imaginaries of latinidad play a vital pedagogical role in the academic success of US Latinos. Explaining the source of his own motivations to study and acquire fluency in Spanish, Marcontoni (2015) recalled how the “shame tactics” of family members and other native speakers discouraged him from speaking Spanish, yet his desire to read the works of Gabriel García Márquez in the original language motivated him to study Spanish, thus setting him on the path of choosing to speak it more often and, in turn, acquire fluency. He wrote that (cf. Lynch & Potowski 2014):

I encourage native speakers, when you come across a Latino who isn’t a fluent Spanish speaker, that you ask them about their interests and maybe recommend a musician, a filmmaker or a writer . . . Maybe they still won’t learn the language, but they will create a positive relationship with the culture and, in turn, with Spanish as well.

Even when unspoken, Spanish language is necessarily part and parcel of the Latino dimensions of the US cultural imaginary. Cañas’ argument regarding the concept of Latino New York is illustrative:

[i]f it is legitimate to speak of a Hispanic communal identity in New York City, it is because people have continued to use the Spanish language in an active and dynamic form, not only as a vehicle of communication and creation, but also as a principal point of reference for a Latino sensibility, however latent, in those Hispanics who speak only English.

2010, p. 252
Similarly, award-winning US Latina novelist Cristina García, who writes in English, has asserted that an “underlying pulse” of Spanish language shapes and informs her discourse, and that limited, emblematic uses of Spanish in her work reflect a “memory-packed punch” delivered by the “mother tongue” (Lynch 2011). In this respect, Spanish as heritage language may be aptly conceptualized through the lens of a collective consciousness and cultural imaginary, recognizing that ideas about ‘heritage’ may serve to empower and, at the same time and in some respects, coerce (Nieto-Phillips 2004). Such were the circumstances of political debate around language in pre-statehood New Mexico, which is the first of the three major topics that I highlight in this chapter.

**Issues and topics**

*The emergence of Spanish as ‘heritage’ language in the Southwest*

*The Spanish legacy*

As the US entered the throes of modernity during the Gilded Age of the late 19th century, in polluted manufacturing centers such as Chicago and Pittsburgh and along expansive railroad networks, romanticist currents prompted an inward look at the spoils of industrialization and a longing for a return to simpler, more rustic ways of life amidst the backdrop of an untouched natural landscape. For Easterners, this meant looking westward, to New Mexico in particular. At the time, the Spanish settlers’ inability to attain modernity came to be viewed by some as a virtue rather than a fault, and a romanticized cultural imaginary of days-gone-by emerged (Weber 2000).

One of the most highly influential and widely popularized works of the time was journalist Charles Lummis’ (1911) book *Some Strange Corners of Our Country*, first published in 1892, in which the natural marvels of the region and the social customs of its indigenous peoples are described—and at times exoticized—in depth of detail. Drawing parallels between the “savage peoples” of the Southwest and the Congo, and comparing the region’s deserts to the Sahara, Lummis explicitly urged proud Americans to learn something of the wonders of the “most remarkable” and “most neglected” area in the US. He opened the book stating that “when these and so many other wonders are a part of America, we, who are Americans, should be ashamed to know absolutely nothing of them” (1911, p. 7), and concluded by affirming that “the trip abroad may at least be postponed until we are ready to tell those we shall meet in foreign lands something of the wonders of our own” (p. 270). With the same propagandistic sort of awe with which he recalled having photographed the flagellation and crucifixion practices of the *Penitentes* during Lent in 1888 (pp. 90–93), he shares with the reader photographs of the “stone autograph-album” at El Morro, a wall-like sandstone promontory where numerous Spanish explorers, among them Juan de Oñate, carved their names as they passed through the area in the 16th and early 17th centuries. There, in Lummis’ words, “the heroes wrote their autographs upon a vast perpendicular page of stone, with their swords which had won the New World for pens!” (p. 167). He observed that:

> All the old inscriptions are in Spanish—and many in very quaint old Spanish, of the days when spelling was a very elastic thing . . . All around these brave old names . . . are Saxon names of the last few decades. Alas! Some of these late-comers have been vandals, and have even erased the names of ancient heroes to make a smooth place for their “John Jones” and “George Smith.”

pp. 168–169
In these lines, Lummis captured the early-20th-century Zeitgeist within which the contemporary US cultural phenomenon of ‘Spanish heritage’ first became manifest. Within that cultural imaginary, Anglo modernity—at times cast in a negative light—was ideologically confronted with a glorified Spanish colonial past. Walt Whitman seemingly foresaw the coming cultural trend. In an open letter written to the people of Santa Fe in 1883, he wrote that:

Character, literature, a society worthy the name, are yet to be establish’d, through a nationality of noblest spiritual, heroic and democratic attributes...To that composite American identity of the future, Spanish character will supply some of the most needed parts.

Whitman 2010, pp. 179–180

Anglo author Helen Hunt Jackson’s critically acclaimed 1884 novel *Ramona* had pervasive cultural influence in the nascent imaginary of the Spanish heritage in relation to indigenous populations of the Southwest. Of course, the confrontation of ‘Indian,’ ‘Anglo,’ and ‘Hispanic’ had been ongoing for three centuries, ever since the physical skirmishes between early colonists in the present-day south of Georgia and north of Florida. Moreover, the climate within which Lummis wrote was rife with the conflict of the Spanish-American War of 1898. In the days following the final battle of the war, some four months before the Treaty of Paris would be signed, the *New York Times* published an editorial accusing Spanish-speaking New Mexicans of having sympathized with Spain. The author of the editorial clearly laid the blame on language, and urged that future policy in Puerto Rico must not follow suit:

The trouble with these disaffected, semi-traitorous citizens is that they have been allowed to attend schools in which only the Spanish language was spoken...As long as this is permitted, of course a considerable majority of the inhabitants will remain “Mexican” and will retain a pseudo-allegiance to the land which, if the matter were one of reason instead of instinct, they would detest much more vehemently than the real American does. All through the territory there are to be found today thousands of children, as well as thousands of adults, to whom English is almost unknown, and therefore a more or less detested, tongue. Such a state of affairs is disgraceful as well as dangerous...In the present attitude of these “Mexicans”, who do not know that they are Americans, there is to be found a strong hint as to the course which should be pursued in Puerto Rico. Absolutely no official recognition should be given hereafter to the Spanish language in that island.

New York Times, 24 August 1898

Some would suggest that such opinions reflected the centuries-long historical influence of the *leyenda negra.* What perhaps lent credibility to the fabricated accusations that *Nuevomexicanos* sympathized with Spain during the conflict was the real extent of Spanish language use throughout the recently annexed Southwest and the growing local sense of pride in the region’s Spanish heritage.

Language and New Mexican identity

‘Spanish-American’ identity emerged in New Mexico during this time, partly in relation to a growing ‘Hispanophile’ movement in the US cultural industries, of which the burgeoning New Mexican tourism industry was one aspect, and partly as an articulation of resistance to political
and social marginalization. As Nieto-Phillips explains, “the Spanish heritage was both the object of Anglos’ fascination and a source of ethnic agency as Nuevomexicanos (of various echelons) struggled to reclaim some degree of control over their political destiny and cultural assets” (2004, p. 8). The cultural ‘heritage’ assets of New Mexico, of which Spanish language constituted a vital part, were fundamental to the future state’s claim to the title ‘land of enchantment.’ Thus came the need to defend the language in the face of Anglo political efforts to abolish it.

In the midst of the political and cultural debates leading up to New Mexico’s 1912 statehood, a young college student named Aurora Lucero delivered a stirring speech in favor of bilingual education and the preservation of the Spanish language as part of an oratorical competition at New Mexico Normal University in December of 1910. Her speech came just six months after President William Howard Taft signed the 1910 Enabling Act for New Mexico and Arizona’s admission into the Union, which stipulated that the constitutions of both states must include provisions to carry out public school education always in English and to establish a requirement for service as a state official or legislator the ability to read, write, speak, and understand English (Crawford n.d.).

Lucero asserted that:

> Spanish is the language of our parents. Today, it is our own, and it will be the language of our children and our children’s children. It is the language bestowed upon us by those who discovered the New World. We are American citizens, for certain, and . . . must learn the language of our country . . . Yet we need not negate in the process our roots, our race, our language, our traditions, our history, or our ancestry, because we shall never be ashamed of these. On the contrary, they shall make us proud. (cited in Nieto-Phillips 2004, p. 173)

Lucero’s intentions in some ways echoed those of Lummis, in that both called upon the US to take stock of its Spanish patrimony and take steps to preserve it. ‘Hispanophilia’ was on the cultural horizon, not just in the work of Lummis but in other important contemporary public figures as well, among them politician Lebaron Bradford Prince (Governor of New Mexico Territory from 1889 to 1893) and philologist Aurelio Espinosa who, like Lucero, urged that Spanish language must be taught in schools. Ultimately, the English language-related provisions of the 1910 Enabling Act were not upheld, and New Mexico became the nation’s first officially bilingual state. However, New Mexico’s legislation proved essentially symbolic. The state constitution contained only two articles pertaining to the role of Spanish: 1) all laws must be published in Spanish—a requirement that has not been enforced since the 1940s; and 2) teachers must be trained in Spanish—a directive that was consistently interpreted as applying only to teachers of monolingual Spanish-speaking children (Bills 1997, p. 170). The present-day website of the American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese (AATSP), founded in 1917, describes the rise of Spanish language study at the time in rather more skeptical terms:

> American isolationism gave Spanish a boost when German was dropped from many schools during the First World War. Spanish became the language of choice, not through any love of the language, but for simple expediency . . . So Spanish developed a constituency and a foothold in American education, but for unattractive and unsatisfactory reasons. (AATSP n.d.)

One of the founding members of the AATSP and one of its most fervent advocates of Spanish language education was Aurelio Espinosa, a pioneer in the study of Spanish in the US. In 1910,
the same year that he joined the faculty of Stanford University, he affirmed in the *Journal of American Folklore* that: “The abundant material which has already been found in New Mexico and Colorado would seem to furnish ample proof that vast treasures of folk-lore are to be found in Texas, California, and Arizona” (Espinosa 1910, p. 395). Espinosa’s interest in documenting the Spanish heritage in the US Southwest was somewhat personal: he was born in 1880 in southern Colorado to a *Nuevomexicano* family who traced their lineage to the original Spanish settlers accompanying Juan de Oñate at the end of the 16th century (Nieto-Phillips 2004, pp. 178–179). In the inaugural issue of the journal *Hispania*, of which he was the first editor-in-chief, Espinosa declared in 1917 that:

> [a]side from giving to problems of pure pedagogical interest the great attention which they deserve, *Hispania* will also attempt to interpret sympathetically to our pupils and teachers of Spanish the history and culture of the great Spain of the past and present.

*p. 19*

While addressing the Mexican and Nahuatl elements in New Mexican Spanish in his now classic three-tome *Studies*, Espinosa was, according to some scholars, more generally concerned with the continuity of Peninsular Spanish in the Southwestern US. As Nieto-Phillips pointed out, Espinosa identified as ‘Spanish’ about 1,000 of the 1,400 local dialect features that he documented in New Mexican Spanish; he attributed another 300 to English, 75 to Nahuatl, and only 10 to autochthonous Indian origin (pp. 180–181). Nieto-Phillips affirmed that “at the heart of Espinosa’s argument was his faith in Nuevomexicano’s linguistic purity” (p. 181), similar to Limón’s (2014) interpretation:

> Espinosa’s studies of the Southwest at times seem to mount a cultural defense, what some would term a “resistance,” to Anglo modernity and occupation. Paradoxically, such a stance is taken in the name of an idealized Spanish language and folklore in New Mexico, one sustained by an ideology based on cultural purity.

*p. 458*

In time, of course, and as Espinosa had perhaps anticipated, English language use would exert an ever greater influence on New Mexican Spanish (Sanz-Sánchez 2014), and Spanish as spoken in Mexico would ultimately prevail through continuous patterns of migration. Bills and Vigil (1999) pointed out that traditional New Mexican Spanish throughout the 20th century was profoundly influenced at all levels by contemporary varieties of Mexican Spanish; they predicted that by the mid-21st century, traditional New Mexican varieties would be near extinction (p. 58).

**Hispanophilia**

**Architecture**

Espinosa’s scholarship was characteristic of the Hispanophile cultural trend that took root during the 1910s. Architecture was a key element of the Spanish heritage imaginary. During the same years in which Espinosa published *Studies in New Mexican Spanish* and large numbers of Mexicans entered the Southwest fleeing the conflicts of the Revolution, plans were made to host the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego in commemoration of the opening of the Panama Canal. The venue where the 1915–1917 exposition would be held was given the name Balboa Park, in honor of the first Spanish explorer to reach the Pacific Ocean from the
New World. For construction of the site, Spanish Colonial Revival architecture was chosen, recalling Mission and Pueblo Revival styles of the Southwest and taking principal inspiration from the Spanish or Mediterranean Revival styles of the late 1800s evident in Florida. The exposition brought national and international acclaim to architect Bertram Goodhue’s work in Balboa Park, and established the vogue of Spanish Colonial Revival style across the US during the 1920s, the best examples of which are found in the cities of San Diego and Santa Barbara, California, and Coral Gables, Florida.

Today, one of Miami’s most affluent neighborhoods, Coral Gables, was conceived by George Merrick in 1921 and incorporated in 1925. Hundreds of grandiose Mediterranean Revival-style residences line some 65 miles of streets bearing Spanish names, all of which would assume new significance with the mass arrival of Cubans in Miami following Fidel Castro’s 1959 Revolution: Ponce De León, Segovia, Sevilla, Aragón, Valencia, Granada, Alhambra, etc. Pérez (1999) affirmed that, during the 1920s, “the vogue of Havana insinuated itself into the vision of Miami: foreign, tropical, exotic, as ambience and circumstance through Spanish-language usage and Royal Palms landscaping” (p. 432). Indeed, in the mid-1920s, about 75% of tourists in South Florida also visited Havana (New York Times 1926), embodying a symbiotic relationship between the two places in the US imaginary. Coral Gables’ legendary Biltmore Hotel is among the more notable examples of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in the US, along with Miami’s Freedom Tower, Pima County Courthouse in Tucson, St. Mary’s Basilica in Phoenix, Corpus Christi Cathedral, El Paso’s Plaza Theatre, Mission Dolores Basilica of San Francisco, St. Vincent Catholic Church in South Los Angeles, and the City Halls of Pasadena and Beverly Hills.

Gebhard (1967) noted that Spanish Colonial Revival style—which “had become the architecture of Southern California” by the end of the 1920s—“had little, if any, real roots in the historic past of the area” and was “almost totally a myth created by newcomers” during the late 19th century (p. 131). The lead architect of the flimsily constructed San Diego exposition that gave impetus to the building fad affirmed that it was meant to be temporary, like stage scenery or “the fabric of a dream” (Goodhue 1916, p. 7). Goodhue was explicit regarding the relationship of the Spanish cultural imaginary to Southern California’s ‘rightful’ heritage:

> it is perhaps strange to say quite flatly that so many buildings that have given pleasure to so many should be destroyed; but, after all, this was the paramount idea in the minds of the Fair’s designers, and only by thus razing all of the Temporary Buildings will San Diego enter upon the heritage that is rightfully hers.

1916, p. 9

Ultimately, several of the buildings were either retained or reconstructed, and remain to the present day, constituting the ‘Spanish’ image of Balboa Park.

The Hollywood film industry

Nowhere was the contemporary concept of Spanish heritage brought more to life than in Hollywood. In keeping with the popular cultural imaginary of the time, Latino film stars were sometimes marketed—or chose to market themselves—as ‘Spanish’ rather than Latin American. The official studio biography of Ramón Novarro, born José Ramón Samaniegos in Durango, Mexico in 1899, stated that he was a Spaniard when, in fact, his family background was assuredly Mexican. Although his mother’s family was partly of Spanish descent (her ancestors were rumored to have sailed from Spain with Cortés), they also claimed Aztec ancestry. His father is
known to have graduated high school in Las Cruces, New Mexico and attended the University of Pennsylvania; his paternal grandfather was one-time Governor of Chihuahua and the first Mexican to be elected to the city council of El Paso, Texas (Rodríguez 2004, pp. 48–49). Novarro’s cousin Dolores Del Río was also described as a “Spanish actress” when she first rose to stardom. Pedro de Córdoba, who began his 116-film career starring in Cecil B. DeMille’s *Carmen* in 1915, was born in New York City to a Parisian French mother and a Cuban father. Because his father’s grandparents had immigrated to Camagüey from Córdoba, Spain, the press and his own management highlighted his Spanish ancestry:

> [i]nstinctively when one sees him, in one’s mind rises visions of brave toreadors . . . graciously fascinating women in waving mantillas and eyes dancing . . . cathedrals of potent meaning with incense and the black robed figures of priests; a pen sketch of the atmosphere in which Pedro would seem at home.

*Chamberlain Brown’s Office, cited in Rodríguez 2004, p. 41*

Actress Anita Page, star of the first sound film to win the Academy Award for Best Picture, was born Anita Pomares, the granddaughter of Salvadoran immigrants in New York City. In 1929, when *The Broadway Melody* won the Oscar, she was described in *Photoplay* magazine as “a blond, blue-eyed Latin” with “a dash of Spanish ancestry” (cited in Rodríguez 2004, p. 14). Numerous other Hollywood actors of the 1910s and 1920s changed their names to capitalize on the ‘Latin’ vogue of the time: New Mexican Joe Page rose to stardom as Don Alvarado; Viennese immigrant Jacob Krantz became Ricardo Cortez; and Mexican-born Paula Marie Osterman allegedly tried out three different names before Hollywood executives decided that Raquel Torres “sounded Spanish enough” (Rodríguez 2004, p. 16). In a 1928 feature in *Photoplay*, Joan Crawford was pictured in a lace mantilla and Spanish shawl with a caption that described her as “more Spanish than the Spaniards themselves” (cited in Rodríguez 2004, pp. 4–5).

**The Tango craze**

Hollywood’s first famed “Latin Lover,” Italian-American actor Rudolph Valentino (born Rodolfo Guglielmi), rose to stardom dancing tango in the nation’s top-grossing film of 1921, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (based on the novel written by Spanish author Vicente Blasco Ibáñez). Most attribute the ‘tango craze’ that spread throughout Paris, London, and ultimately New York in the 1910s to the success of the musical comedy *The Sunshine Girl*, which premiered at London’s Gaiety Theatre in February of 1912. Groppa (2004) observed that, in this production, the British performers “appeared on stage dressed like Spaniards,” including Andalusian hat and Manila shawl, thus giving “a poor example to a nascent Hollywood film industry that never shook off this stereotype” (p. 11). One year later, the show opened in New York’s Knickerbocker Theatre, marking the entry of this characteristically Buenos Aires bordello-born style of music and dance into the US cultural imaginary. By January 1914, *The New York Times* ran a seven-column headline declaring “All New York Now Madly Whirling in the Tango”; there were some 700 dance halls across the city open from noon until dawn of the next day (Groppa 2004, p. 21). The fact that tango became entirely in vogue among the city’s aristocrats and the local social scene of the upper echelon secured its success.

Perhaps because the principal protagonists of the tango craze in New York were not Argentinian (or even Argentine-American), the linguistic dimension of the music was never fully conveyed. Groppa speculated that the reason so many prominent Argentinian tango professionals did not prosper in New York at the time was the language barrier. This was still
true in the 1930s for the world’s best-known tango artist, Carlos Gardel, whose acting career with Paramount Pictures was curtailed by his reported inability to master English; none of his highly successful Spanish-language films were subtitled or dubbed into English. Tucci (1969) recounted that at the New York premier of his 1934 film *Cuesta abajo* at the Teatro Campoamor in East Harlem (i.e. Spanish Harlem), crowds filled the street to catch a glimpse of the star, who was received with a 15-minute ovation at the theater. Undoubtedly, the throngs of fans who awaited him were mostly Caribbean-origin Spanish speakers. New York’s Hispanic population increased from 22,000 in 1916 to 134,000 in 1940; according to the 1930 Census, 41% of that population was Puerto Rican and another 18% were Cuban or Dominican (Haslip-Viera 2010, p. 36). Puerto Rican (im)migration was driven by the economic prosperity of the 1920s and the Jones Act of 1917, which granted Puerto Ricans US citizenship. By the early 1930s, formerly Jewish-predominant East Harlem had become a majority Puerto Rican neighborhood.14

In sum, during the 1910s and 1920s—a time of economic prosperity across the US—things ‘Spanish,’ and to lesser extent ‘Latin’ or ‘Spanish-speaking,’ entered the nation’s cultural imaginary for the first time, through seemingly localized phenomena: economic development and tourism in New Mexico; architectural styles in specific urban settings of Florida and the Southwest; tango halls in New York City; and the spaces of Hollywood movies and the identities of actors who appeared in them. Because the film of this era was silent, language was a non-issue. With the advent of talkies in the late 1920s and early 1930s—coinciding with the nation’s most catastrophic economic downturn and the resonance of political unrest in Europe—Latino actors, and particularly those who spoke Hispanic-accented English, began to be typecast. It was with good reason that US Spanish heritage speaker Margarita Carmen Cansino changed her name to Rita Hayworth shortly after entering the Hollywood film industry in the mid-1930s. During this time, Hispanophilia quickly waned as the real-life consequences of the Wall Street Crash were felt, and political tensions between populist, nationalist, socialist, and communist ideologies grew across Europe and Latin America.

Repercussions of the Great Depression

The Good Neighbor Policy

During the 1930s, in keeping with his longstanding Good Neighbor Policy, President Franklin D. Roosevelt pledged that the US would no longer intervene or interfere in the domestic affairs of the nations of Latin America. His administration undertook various efforts of cultural diplomacy aimed at establishing more positive relationships with Latin American governments. Special emphasis was placed on Pan American Day in public schools, and exchange programs for art exhibits and for university professors and students were established. Latin American leaders were received in Washington with pomp and circumstance, and the 1939 World’s Fair in New York City, with the motif “The World of Tomorrow,” showcased international relations. Brazil’s Ambassador of Good Will for the Fair was Carmen Miranda, who went on to become the muse of Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor campaign, appearing in 14 Hollywood films. Like Lupe Vélez before her in the 1930s, Miranda embodied and performed the stereotype of the vivacious and ‘hot-blooded’ Latina who spoke highly accented English.15 In conjunction with the Office of Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), Hollywood’s Production Code Administration was charged with presenting Latin Americans in a favorable light, introducing Latin American themes and settings in film, and ensuring linguistic ‘authenticity’ (Rodríguez 2004, p. 82). Adams (2007) pointed out that this policy was “not entirely altruistic or indicative
of a new and higher level of ethnic consciousness but in large measure economic” as Hollywood looked increasingly toward Latin America during the 1930s, when European markets were falling under the control of Nazi Germany (p. 292). The elites of Latin America who controlled the markets targeted by Hollywood executives were concerned with promoting a particular image of their own, to wit: “the modernity and architectural wonders of large Latin American cities with skyscrapers, automobiles, and surprisingly clean and bustling city streets with fashionably western-dressed [light-skinned] men and women” (Adams 2007, p. 294).

**Immigration and deportation**

While Hollywood exported preconceived images of Latin America to Latin America itself, Washington deported Mexicans. From 1929 to 1935, according to the Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS), about 82,000 Mexicans were formally removed from the US, some through voluntary proceedings (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services 2014). However, the number reported in 1936 by the U.S. Consulate General in Mexico City for the years 1930–1935 was much higher: 345,839. Other historical estimates place the figure higher still (Koch 2006). The official website of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2014) states that:

In 1930, as the extent of the Depression became more clear some Americans accused Mexicans, as well as other aliens, of holding jobs needed by U.S. citizens. At the same time, local relief agencies began to feel the strain of using decreasing resources to serve an increasingly needy populace. Many agencies felt pressure to exclude foreign-born applicants from receiving aid. Some agencies and local governments began requiring applicants to show proof of legal residence. Others used the threat of federal immigration law, which held that immigrants who became “public charges” could be deported, to discourage them from requesting aid. These conditions likely caused many Mexicans to consider returning to their native country.

However, personal accounts such as that related by Ignacio Piña, a Mexican-American child living in Montana in 1931, offer other insight into the experiences of many of those deported:

“They came in with guns and told us to get out . . . They didn’t let us take anything,” not even a trunk that held birth certificates proving that he and his five siblings were U.S.-born citizens. The family was thrown into a jail for 10 days before being sent by train to Mexico. Piña says he spent 16 years of “pure hell” there before acquiring papers of his Utah birth and returning to the USA.

Koch 2006

By 1942, the Roosevelt administration would initiate the Bracero program through diplomatic agreement with the Mexican government, bringing nearly a quarter of a million Mexican workers into the US over the next five years and appropriating nearly $120 million for the program, “every penny of which should be regarded as a direct subsidy to the large-scale employers of farm labor in a period of unprecedented prosperity” (McWilliams 1990, p. 238). As a result of the strenuous push-and-pull dynamics of cross-border movements and heightened patriotism in the midst of World War II, the Zoot Suit Riots erupted in Los Angeles in 1943, linked to ‘Pachuco’ urban forms of dress and creative Spanish-language use among young Mexican-Americans.
The emergence of ‘Spanglish’ as political construct

Simultaneously, Operation Bootstrap got underway in Puerto Rico as a late outgrowth of the Good Neighbor policy, on the heels of US federal attempts to linguistically Anglicize the population. In defense of Spanish language use, Puerto Rican intellectuals emphatically recalled the Island’s Spanish heritage. In Problemas de la Cultura Puertorriqueña (1934), Emilio Belaval affirmed that:

[s]omos españoles hasta la médula, y en nuestro contenido nacional hay una cantidad respetable de españolismo vital . . . A la afirmación que más miedo le tenemos es a admitir que somos españoles, y por eso, es que hemos resistido sin que hasta ahora se nos rompa el espinaço.

Manuel Rivera Matos (1940) wrote that: “sabemos que el espíritu y la expresión de un pueblo son consustanciales con el idioma en el cual está contenido toda nuestra herencia cultural”; and Antonio Sáez (1940) declared that: “el destino de nuestra cultura está fatalmente determinado por el destino de nuestra lengua. La lengua es algo más que un instrumento de comunicación. Es una manera de ver el mundo” (both cited in Vélez 2000, p. 13).16 But it was perhaps Salvador Tió’s argument that would have the most longstanding and far-reaching ideological implications for future discussions of Spanish-English bilingualism in the US: “Teoría del espanglish.”

Tió’s playful tongue-in-cheek commentary, published in Diario de Puerto Rico in 1948, is credited with giving rise to use of the term ‘Spanglish’ in popular and academic spheres. In the opening lines of the article, Tió declared that bilingualism is “dos lenguas muertas”; “una disgregación del pensamiento”; “máquina de fabricar gagos.” Ironically affirming that he is opposed to bilingualism because of the damage that Puerto Ricans might do to the English language (“No debemos cargar con la responsabilidad histórica de acabar con un gran idioma”), he proposes—in jocose tone—that ‘Spanglish’ must be regarded as the unitary language of Puerto Rico: “El espanglismo pretende que usemos una lengua como si fuesen dos.” More than 60 years later, Otheguy and Stern (2010) maintained that the now pervasive use of the term ‘Spanglish’ has proven pernicious, principally because the extraordinary degree of fusion with English language structures that is suggested by this etymologically hybrid term ideologically alienates Spanish speakers in the US from those living elsewhere. Moreover, they argued, it perpetuates the widely held misconception that the language spoken by US Latinos is not ‘really Spanish’ or is an ‘incomplete’ version of what should be ‘Spanish’ (see Otheguy 2016 on this latter point). They offered a historical explanation for this false belief:

A strategy of scorn and contempt of Spanish speakers was established in the USA in the 1940s and 1950s in the wake of the early waves of Latin American immigration. Many academics and commentators of the time demeaned the Spanish of these immigrants because it was not Castilian Spanish. That which you speak, the immigrants were admonished, is not Spanish, because it does not reflect the norms of north-central Spain . . . Many of them accepted this criticism and decided that the language that they had brought from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or elsewhere, was of little value . . . Yesterday’s strategy of depriving immigrants of their Spanish language because it was not Castilian has been transmuted, today, into the attempt to take it from them by labeling it as Spanglish.

Otheguy & Stern 2010, p. 97
Implications and conclusions

The economic and political circumstances of everyday life that developed during the days of the Great Depression and the conflict of World War II would provide the ideological and theoretical basis of the contemporary sociolinguistic study of Spanish in the US, principally in locales along the US-Mexico border and in New York City vis-à-vis the Island. Among the scholars whose now classic works reflected those circumstances well were Rosaura Sánchez (1972, 1983) and Joshua Fishman and colleagues (1971) (see Klee & Lynch 2009 for further references). Through a Marxist analysis of Spanish language use in the Southwest during the 1970s, Sánchez exposed the pervasiveness of US consumerist ideology along both sides of the border, emphasizing the impact of upward economic mobility on Spanish language use and the ‘push-and-pull’ effects of migration on linguistic identities. In his seminal work North from Mexico first published in 1948, McWilliams affirmed that:

Migration from Mexico is deeply rooted in the past. It follows trails which are among the most ancient on the North American continent. Psychologically and culturally, Mexicans have never emigrated to the Southwest: they have returned . . . As finally fixed, the border was a border of the borderlands rather than a national boundary.

Referring to the Pachuco speech phenomenon that spread from El Paso to the cities of California during the 1920s and 1930s, McWilliams characterized the Mexican borderlands as a region of “cultural fusion” (pp. 258–261). His idea perhaps conveyed a sense similar to that of the term ‘transculturation’ coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1947, and later applied to the sociolinguistic situation of Cuban-Americans in Miami by the end of the millennium (Otheguy, García, & Roca 2000).

Many of the older Chicanos who formed part of Sánchez’s research surely lived the traumatic effects of the Bracero program, the stark anti-immigrant attitudes of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as the deportation practices that stemmed from those attitudes. The social stigmatization, stereotyping, and conflict of identities experienced by that generation likely led Mexican-origin actors such as Lupe Vélez to be typecast in Hollywood—in much the same way that Sofia Vergara has been in the present-day popular television series Modern Family—and others such as Rita Hayworth to attempt to erase their Latino heritage altogether. In urban areas, segregation and marginalization created the sort of living conditions that conditioned the cultural and institutional complexities of language choice at the crux of Fishman’s seminal work Bilingualism in the Barrio, the same conditions reflected in the iconic Broadway production West Side Story (Negrón-Muntaner 2000), and in Zentella’s widely cited ethnography Growing Up Bilingual (1997).

The issues of perceived/constructed ‘Spanish’ heritage, ‘Latin’ identity, cultural production, and (im)migration prior to World War II that I have described in this chapter, in relation to local social and economic currents, continue to give shape to the US cultural imaginary in the present day, informing the theoretical and ideological bases of our work as teachers and researchers of Spanish language in the current US political climate. What notions of Latina/o and/or Spanish-speaking identity during the early 20th century might suggest, in retrospect, is that the construction of latinidad is driven largely by economic and political motivations. Greater prosperity is more likely to condition broader acceptance, visibility, and general interest in ‘things Latin’ in the US context; economic downturns and political crisis or instability give way to a heightened sense of Hispanophobia and concomitant English-only attitudes. It is surely no coincidence that
the mainstream vogue of things Latin came to a rather abrupt halt with the Wall Street Crash in 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression during the early 1930s, just as the burst of the Dot-com bubble in 2000 and the September 11 attacks of the following year soon quelled the ‘Latin fever’ of the 1990s. During the ‘Roaring Twenties,’ markets soared, real estate boomed, and consumerism flourished as a consequence of low unemployment rates. Similarly, the 1990s were characterized by great economic prosperity, with the US federal government reaching not only a zero deficit by the final years of the Clinton administration but actually entering into a budget surplus (FactCheck.org 2008). Although the economy per se was obviously not what produced the Latino cultural trend, prosperity surely facilitated it.

While observing the relative prominence of latinidad in the national cultural imaginaries of both time periods, one must always bear in mind that anti-immigrant sentiment was still very much present. On the one hand, the political context was ripe with anti-immigrant sentiment and English-only imperatives in the early 20th century. We recall Teddy Roosevelt’s 1907 Proclamation that: “We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language.” In 1906, Roosevelt signed The Naturalization Act into law, which required immigrants to demonstrate English language ability to be granted citizenship, despite the absence of any official language policy at the federal level in the US. Some scholars attribute these restrictive language policies to the government’s effort to subdue revolutionary immigrant workers. Yet, on the other hand, there was a growing appreciation of things Spanish, and an effort to recall and reconstruct the nation’s Spanish legacy through architecture, tourism, and advocacy for Spanish language education. This apparent contradiction of ideological terms was not a fluke of the time; it can still be observed in our present moment. The findings of a study published in 2011 by Branton, Cassese, Jones and Westerland highlighted the difference between attitudes toward acculturation, attitudes toward the Latino presence in the US, and attitudes toward Latino visibility in the mass media versus anti-immigrant attitudes per se. Analyzing data taken from the National Election Studies in 2000 and 2004, these authors demonstrated that acculturation fear, anti-Latino sentiment, and media exposure were determining factors that conditioned attitudes toward immigration after the 9/11 terrorist attacks; yet in the 2000 data, before the attacks, they observed that none of those ‘Latino’ factors bore a correlation with attitudes regarding immigration. This study suggests that anti-immigrant and English-only sentiment may in some respects be independent of attitudes toward Latino visibility in the media and in cultural production, or the Latino presence in the US more generally. This would perhaps explain some of the apparent contradiction of the 1990s, when a so-called ‘Latin fever’ swept US popular culture and Spanish emerged nationally as a legitimate voice of commerce, advertising, and retail in relation to transnational markets and neoliberalist economic strategy; and concomitantly, Spanish language programs at schools, colleges, and institutions of higher learning expanded significantly. Yet it was also in 1998 that the state of California banned bilingual education programs in public schools, immediately followed by Arizona and Massachusetts.

In addition to noting that acculturation fear, anti-Latino sentiment, and media exposure bore little or no relationship to anti-immigrant attitudes in the year leading up to the 9/11 attacks, Branton et al. (2011) also made an interesting observation regarding the volume of immigration-related stories published in selected newspapers from across the US: there was no significant increase of immigration-related stories during 2001–2005 (in comparison to 1996–2000); but in major newspapers published beyond the Border region, there indeed was a significant increase in that same time period. This was the case of the Charlotte Observer, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune, the New York Times, and the Washington Post. This finding is perhaps suggestive of the variations of local versus national imaginaries, and localized factors or forces that condition language ideologies. Although anti-immigrant and English-only ideologies pervaded the US during the
early 20th century, attitudes toward things ‘Latino’ in the cultural imaginary could oft be quite positive, especially at local levels. Irrespective of the economic circumstances—prosperity or austerity—racism remains a constant variable. The European-origin (i.e. Spanish or ostensibly Spanish-background), ‘whitewashed’ images of \textit{latinidad} so prevalent in 1920s Hollywood remain to the present day, as Dávila (2000) observed:

Representations of \textit{latinidad} in the Spanish TV networks, when not revolving around generic representations that prioritize white Hispanic actors and talent, have generally reduced different Latino/a subgroups to particular cultural indexes . . . The dominance of white Hispanic types in Spanish TV negates and leaves little room for acknowledging Latinos/as’ racial and ethnic diversity.

Linked to such generic representations of Latinos in the mass media is an equally generic, i.e. normatively ‘neutral,’ Spanish-speaking voice (Valencia & Lynch 2016).

Renewed and at times quite virulent debates regarding institutionalized racial discrimination, (im)migration control along the US-Mexico border, the use of Spanish in US public life, the role of Spanish language in mass media and marketing, as well as bilingual education policy and practice in recent years, serve to remind us that the construction of \textit{latinidad} is ongoing and, in some respects, has seemingly—and in some regards lamentably—evolved very little over the past century. My hope is that, through this chapter, readers may confront the present volume with a historically more nuanced understanding of the necessary relationship between ‘Latina/o’ cultural imaginaries and Spanish language use and acceptance in the US context, and the potential contribution of these imaginaries to language research agendas.

Notes

1 Aparicio (2003) notes that the definition of \textit{latinidad} depends upon the academic discipline from which the concept is approached. In the realm of cultural studies, she states that: “Latinidad has been partly defined as the ways in which the entertainment industry, mainstream journalism, and Hollywood have homogenized all Latinos into one undifferentiated group, thus erasing our historical, national, racial, class, and gender subjectivities” (p. 91). Despite the stereotypes and essentializing or particularistic images that the construct often serves to reiterate and perpetuate, Aparicio argues that \textit{latinidad} as a site of potential homogenization—or, on the other hand, cultural wars—can be fruitfully exploited to reveal convergences and divergences along common lines: “By rethinking Latinidad through media and popular culture as a site through which we produce knowledge about a Latino other and we explore our (post)colonial analogies, we are, in fact, proposing a ‘decolonial imaginary’” (p. 94).

2 Roberts (1979) suggested that: “The 1930s saw the introduction of Latin music as a substyle within US popular music as a whole; the late 1970s saw its clear emergence as a major ingredient in the sound of almost all American popular idioms” (p. 186).

3 As explained by Powell (1971), “The basic premise of the Black Legend is that Spaniards have shown themselves, historically, to be uniquely cruel, bigoted, tyrannical, obscurantist, lazy, fanatical, greedy, and treacherous” (p. 11). Many attribute this ‘Hispanophobic’ bias in historical documentation to propaganda of the British Crown and the Protestant Reformation beginning in the early 16th century; others argue that it predates the 16th century. According to Weber (2000), the English prejudice toward the Spanish was transplanted to North American soil, tainting contemporary US–Latin American relations and fomenting anti-Hispanic and racist sentiment within the context of the US. Along those lines, González Pino and Pino argued in 2007 that that the \textit{leyenda negra} still influenced the attitudes and perceptions of Spanish heritage language (SHL) students in the US Southwest. Their survey study revealed that more than half of SHL students considered that the public perception of Spain’s heritage in both Latin America and the United States was negative; “half appeared not proud of the Spanish heritage,
and 63% picked negative characterizations of it” (p. 235). As one reviewer pointed out, such negative stereotypes regarding non-Anglos and immigrants in general have traditionally existed in the US.

4 Sanz-Sánchez (2014) observed that “New Mexico, where both bilingualism and shift to English seem to have been kept largely at check until the early 20th century, was a clear exception to [the] general process of language shift” in other areas of the Southwest (p. 225).

5 The Naturalization Act of 1906, signed into law by President Theodore Roosevelt, required that immigrants demonstrate English language ability in order to be granted citizenship. As Ovando explained, the restrictive language policies of the turn of the century likely came about “as an ideological support for the new imperialism, as a practical instrument of colonial rule, and as a form of social control at home, directed at revolutionary immigrant workers” (2003, p. 18).

6 The New Mexico state legislature created the Spanish-American Normal School at El Rito in 1909 with the express purpose of preparing New Mexican Spanish-speaking natives to become public school teachers in areas where the Spanish language was prevalent; the school is now Northern New Mexico University.

7 In early debates around statehood in New Mexico in 1890, both Anglo Republicans and Nuevomexicanos objected to English-only provisions. The Republicans’ reasoning was that, once New Mexico joined the Union, the influx of European and Anglo-American immigrants would naturally produce language shift from Spanish to English in all spheres of public life (Nieto-Phillips 2004, pp. 76–77). Indeed, this is what ultimately happened.

8 Limón affirmed that: “In examining Aurelio Espinosa’s writings on the Spanish Civil War, we see the way that his understanding of Spanish identity extended from the realm of the imaginary past and into the realm of present-day politics” (2014, p. 464). Espinosa’s Catholic conservatism and right-wing political orientation shaped his relationship with Spanish philologists of his time, such as Ramón Menéndez Pidal, whom Espinosa condemned for supporting the Republican cause in Spain (Limón 2014, p. 463). Explicit in his support of Franco’s Nationalist party during the 1930s, Espinosa was, according to Limón, probably apprehensive about Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal project: “Against these menacing versions of modernity being enacted in the United States and across the Atlantic, Espinosa’s folklore studies attempted to promote and exalt traditional Catholicism and what he viewed as pre-modern forms of social organization in the Southwest” (p. 464).

9 Early examples in Florida are the Ponce de León Hotel (now Flagler College) and the Alcázar Hotel (now Lightner Museum) in St. Augustine, both completed in 1887. Castillo San Marcos, the original fortress constructed by the Spanish to defend St. Augustine, is among the extremely few preserved or reconstructed architectural remains of the original Spanish rule of Florida. Founded by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés in 1565, the city is today considered America’s oldest.

10 Gebhard identifies two chronological phases of Spanish Colonial Revival style architecture: 1) Mission Revival (1880s–1900s), which was loosely inspired by early California mission constructions, as well as Pueblo or Santa Fe Revival (1880s–1920s), inspired by the provincial Spanish colonial buildings in the Río Grande River Valley of New Mexico; and 2) Mediterranean Revival (1910s–early 1930s), combining elements principally from Spain and Italy, but sometimes Mexico and Islamic North Africa as well (1967, pp. 131–132).

11 Fluent in various languages, Novarro took pride in his Spanish-speaking background and was actively involved in outreach to the Latino community. He built Teatro Íntimo in his home, where Los Angeles youth performed plays and songs entirely in Spanish. He also starred in highly successful Spanish-language films in Mexico.

12 In 1929, at the height of her celebrity, Del Río declared that:

Someday I would like to play a Mexican woman and show what life in Mexico really is . . . I am eager to play in stories concerning my native people, the Mexican race. It is my dearest wish to make fans realize their real beauty, their wonder, their greatness as a people.

Carr 1979, p. 42

13 Groppa affirms that tango and jazz emerged simultaneously, and in parallel fashion:

Having both risen at the end of the nineteenth century as a result of rhythms, races, and a dissatisfaction of the mixture, jazz, like the tango, originated in dance halls and slum brothels. Both were rejected socially but were eventually accepted and considered authentic art forms of their respective countries.

Groppa 2004, p. 15
US latinidad, Spanish as heritage language

14 Though Puerto Ricans were significantly present in New York City by the 1930s as well as other urban areas of the US by the 1940s, it was not until the 1957 Broadway musical (and 1961 blockbuster film) *West Side Story* that they would be interpellated in the US mainstream cultural imaginary. As Negrón-Muntaner explains:

> The film opened a discursive space from which to speak for the “real” Puerto Rican community... *West Side Story* locates Puerto Rican identity at the crossroads of colonialism, racialization, and shame by addressing not just one Puerto Rican but a whole community as abject. Yet, in hailing Puerto Ricans and immediately constituting their subjectivity as criminal, this group acquires several previously denied possibilities, including social and visual representability.

*Negrón-Muntaner 2000, pp. 84–86*

15 In her recurring lead role as Carmelita Lindsay in the seven-film *Mexican Spitfire* series, which was associated with Hollywood’s Good Neighbor initiatives, Vélez exaggerated accent, grammatical imprecision, hand gestures, and facial expression to comic effect. This typecast character secured her place in Hollywood until her suicide in 1944, after so many other Latino actors had fallen out of work in the 1930s.

16 It was not until 1949, when Puerto Rico’s first democratically elected governor Luis Muñoz Marín took office, that Spanish was declared the language of instruction in public schools.

17 Dávila reminds the reader that:

> Debates about the representativity of any media are not unique to Latino-oriented and Spanish-language media. Such controversy is, in fact, common to any media whose mass scope inherently excludes entire segments of its putative audience... In contrast to the so-called general market media, however, the Hispanic media have historically functioned and promoted themselves as the “spokespersons” for the totality of U.S. Latinos, a pretense that makes even more problematic the real biases of their representations.

*Dávila 2000, p. 38*

**Further reading**


**References**


US latinidad, Spanish as heritage language


