Summary

Who are we when we read queer Latinx literature? It may be helpful in approaching this topic to think about what we mean by America along with what we mean by Latinx, or Latina/o, and Latin American. Some Latin Americans, for example, become irritated by US citizens referring to their own country as America when in fact that term refers to two enormous continents. Another issue to consider is what dynamic exists between Latino/a and Latin American as terms identifying groups of people. We should add Caribbean to this discussion, which also complicates matters since Puerto Ricans are US citizens with histories tied to the Caribbean. Mexican Americans (or Chican/aos) live in a country that borders the other “half” of their designation. Both these cases introduce vexed questions about immigration and belonging. Queer itself is not a word that escapes controversy. It can be used as a provocation, to challenge hate language by neutralizing it. But does that work? How do we know when it does? And when do we know when we have succeeded and can drop its usage entirely? And does queer automatically mean gay? In its usage as an umbrella terms what happens to the specificity of same-sex desire? And finally, literature is itself a contested term as there is no critical consensus on what exactly designates written expression as literature as opposed to simply writing. Therefore I would argue that any attempt to be comprehensive about Queer Latinx literature can only be provisional. But any such attempt that is based on critical rigor and empathy should be welcomed.

Keywords: Latino, gay, literature, AIDS, activism, Latin American fiction, queer identities, aesthetics.
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