

*New Latinx/Chicanx Thought**Ariana E. Vigil*

For over two centuries, Latinx peoples in the United States have utilized cultural production to establish their unique voices, contesting dominant and homogenous notions of American-ness while reflecting the diversity of Latinx communities. Latinx literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries engaged with Latinx and US history and social movements and explored a variety of forms and genres, drawing from North American and Latin American traditions, among others. Building on this work, recent publications by Chicanx and Latinx authors and scholars have remained socially and politically engaged while pushing the boundaries of cultural representation, implicitly and explicitly arguing for the necessity and salience of new kinds of terminology, more expansive understandings of Latinx peoples, and new ways of evaluating and discussing Latinx literature. Taking a critical look at new developments in the field, this chapter highlights three aspects of recent Chicanx and Latinx literature and scholarship. The first section looks at the adoption of the letter “x” in the terms Latinx and Chicanx. The latter sections examine how the issues of representation, inclusion, and visibility raised through the use of the term “Latinx” are also reflected in recent publications by Latinx writers. Overall, this chapter encourages us to appreciate how recent Chicanx and Latinx literature and scholarship engages with issues of race, nation, and ethnicity alongside questions of gender and sexuality, giving voice to a new generation of writers who continue the important work of breaking boundaries and asserting the value of recognizing and dwelling in hybrid spaces.

The X

By far the most visible shift that marks recent Latinx cultural production is the widespread adoption of the term Latinx, in which the letter “x” replaces other endings such as “o,” “a/o,” or “@.” The “x” is the latest solution to

the problem of how to account for gender diversity within the constraints of the Spanish language. While the “x” responds specifically to the question of gender, we can understand the growth and adoption of this term within the larger “history of contestation” regarding terminology and names (Guidotti-Hernández 142). Latinx and other marginalized peoples have long sought to establish and utilize terms of their own choosing, struggles that push back against imposed and derogatory labels and illustrate larger movements for self-determination. As Patricia Engel notes, the term is a way “to claim our identity rather than accept what has been served to us on a platter or shoved down our throats” (“On naming ourselves,” 199). Nicole Guidotti-Hernández contextualizes the turn to the term “Latinx” within the history of other designations and their ascendance, including Nuyorican and Chicano. In fact, in the latter half of the twentieth century Chicana/os adopted the “x” in their formulation of “Xicano” and “Xicana.” The use of the “X” to replace “Ch” was meant to recognize and celebrate Chicax indigeneity as the letter was inspired by Nahuatl, in which “x” is pronounced “sh,” a sound akin to the “ch” of “Chicano.” The letter “x” also suggests a radical politics and a defiance of Anglo terms, harkening back to the defiant self-naming and rejection of imposed names by figures such as Malcolm X. More recently, “Latinx” arose in internet-based media in 2004 but resurfaced to more widespread usage in 2015, when it was recognized by the *Oxford English Dictionary* (DeGuzmán 216; Guidotti-Hernández 147). The deployment of the term, however, has not occurred without robust discussions regarding its potentials and pitfalls. A 2017 special issue of *Cultural Dynamics* edited by Claudia Milian was devoted to “Theorizing the X,” while a 2018 special issue of *English Language Notes* coedited by María A. Windell and Jesse Alemán looked at “Latinx Lives in Hemispheric Context.” The conversation and debate among scholars have generated useful discussions that foreground the sexual, gender, racial, and citizenship politics enacted by the term, and a questioning of what might be lost in its uncritical deployment.

As individuals who find the term useful will tell you, “Latinx” encompasses a wider variety of gender identities that move beyond and outside the binary of “man” and “woman.” The term is meant to recognize transgender, nonbinary, agender, and gender-fluid individuals, as well as those that identify with a fixed, binary gender. As Guidotti-Hernández claims, and building on the work of José Esteban Muñoz, “the x can carry the affective load of being trans, and of gender fluidity in a way that the @ or a/o cannot” (149). But some scholars have suggested that the term might not represent all those it claims to. Richard T. Rodríguez and Patricia

Engel ask how those who do identify with a binary gender identity might be served by the term, particularly when the term is applied anachronistically (Rodríguez 203; Engel, "On naming ourselves," 199). Asking who the x "crosses out or eliminates," Rodríguez questions if the term is used only by "English-speaking, academic, and class-ascendant communities," a point Engel also raises in drawing attention to the term's relationship to the English language (Rodríguez 203; Engel, "On naming ourselves," 198). Rodríguez's questions raise concerns that are not unique to the term "Latinx" and ones that those of us in this area of study have had to contend with for quite some time. The question of anachronism, for example, continues to plague the field: can or should one refer to a nineteenth-century writer such as María Amparo Ruíz de Burton as "Chicana" when, despite the fact that the term might be used to identify her today, "Chicana" was not in usage during her lifetime and does not capture her racial and class background? Similarly, the term "Latina/o," while widely in use in academic spaces, is not necessarily accepted or used by all the people to whom it claims to apply. Despite its origins in US government initiatives, the term "Hispanic" continues to have widespread acceptance, while many people assert their preference for nation-specific identities. These preferences and usages have been explored for decades, from Suzanne Oboler's *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives* through Guidotti-Hernández's more recent article. Thus, the questions of applicability, erasure, and elitism that Rodríguez raises in relation to "Latinx" are valid but can also be applied to other terms. Rodríguez's most compelling criticism, however, is that the potential strength of the term – its ability to include a greater diversity of gender identities – may not be realized through careless usage. Do scholars who insist on using the term, he asks, "really engage with gender neutrality, non-conformity and inclusivity" (206)? To simply assume that "Latinx" is the "new way" to refer to "Latina/os" without doing the extra work of interrogating norms around gender and sexuality at best robs the word of its more radical origins and at worst coopts the peoples and identities that gave rise to it.

While "Latinx" is widely recognized for its potential to acknowledge and resituate gender diversity, Joshua Guzmán reminds us that the continuous search for adequate language reflects the ongoing repercussions of colonialism, imperialism, enslavement, and forced migration that have entailed linguistic loss as well as loss of land, bodily autonomy, and political sovereignty (145). The "x," then, references legacies of colonialism, imperialism, and enslavement and gestures to the racial politics at play in the term as well. Scholars have argued for the term's ability to require a recognition

of indigeneity and Blackness and concomitant reckoning with racism and anti-blackness within Latinx communities. Alan Pelaez Lopez argues that the “x” is a “scar” that exposes four wounds: settlement, anti-Blackness, femicides, and inarticulation. While conceding that the term is not for everyone, he suggests that we use it to critically reflect on violence against LGBTQIA people and places this conversation within a larger context of systemic injustice. Answering Rodríguez’s challenge to engage more deeply with the people and issues that the term acknowledges, Lopez suggests that Latinx people can address the four wounds he names by acknowledging Indigenous peoples and territories and valuing and honoring women and femmes.

The potential power of the term “Latinx” might be strongest in regards to its ability to resituate *mestizaje* in relation to indigeneity and Blackness and in its intersectional linking of these racial categories to gendered ones. Christine García explains that the term both confronts and challenges the gender binary and also engages in a “decolonization” of the term Latina/Latino to explicitly “reject the silencing and erasure of AfroLatinx and indigenous languages by standard Spanish” (210). Just as the “x” rejects the either/or of “man/woman,” it challenges the “either/or identification based on Euro-Hispanic roots of the terms” (211). Lopez relates the letter “x” to an Afro-Latinx identity specifically, writing that for him the letter reminds him of an x on a map, marking the spot where his “African ancestors arrived after they were kidnapped, chained, transported, and enslaved throughout Latin America.” We can understand the “x” as a territorial marker and also a linguistic one, or, more precisely, as a marker of what has been lost. Just as it did for Malcolm X, the letter x may represent names, families, and histories lost to slavery, forced migration, and colonization.

Finally, “Latinx” potentially draws together individuals with diverse relationships to the nation-state. María DeGuzmán agrees with Lopez, asserting that the x does not “orient, but it does locate” (220). However, she connects the mark with claiming space as those who may be marginalized by nations and institutions assert that they are “here/aquí.” Discussing the term’s deployment by activists at the University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill, she writes: “the ‘x’ of Latinx had begun to include all those forms of abjected ‘Latin’ being: the refugee, the migrant, the undocumented, the incarcerated, the stateless, and so on” (221). Used this way, the term became a way of emphasizing unity, specifically among a Latinx population of mixed status (223).

These discussions offer us a history and context for the term “Latinx,” as well as a useful caution to deploy the term with care. It is particularly

important, as Rodríguez and Lopez urge, to make sure that those of us who adopt the term do so not only with an acknowledgment of the political projects attached to it – including feminism, queer inclusivity, transgender liberation, and affirmations of indigeneity and Blackness – but also to match this acknowledgment with concrete actions regarding decolonization and justice. If the term simply replaces other terms without such actions and acknowledgments – for example, renaming a “Chicana/o literature” course “Latinx literature” without altering the authors and texts taught in the course – this would do a disservice to the people for whom the word and the histories it references have embodied meaning and significance. The importance of attaching new thought and action to this new term also reminds us of the constructedness and ultimate insufficiency of all language. As stated earlier, the x references indigeneity via a Nahuatl sound, but of course Nahuatl-speaking peoples are only one of hundreds of Indigenous communities colonized by Europeans. Relatedly, the word to which the x is affixed – Latin – is hardly sufficient or accurate to describe the racial, linguistic, and ethnic mixture of peoples to whom it is applied.¹ As such the word, no word, can possibly capture the diversity of gender, race, language, and history of millions of people; rather, scholars, cultural workers, and activists continue to imbue these terms with their meaning.

Expanded Voices

The term “Latinx” has sought to acknowledge, recognize, and honor those individuals and identities often excluded from mainstream representation of Latinx communities. This move has been matched by a flourishing of diverse Latinx literary voices that reflect ethnonational, geographic, and identitarian perspectives that exceed normative notions of *Latinidad*. Traditionally, Latinx peoples have been represented by four major ethnonational groups: Chicana/os, Dominican-Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Cuban-Americans. This representation was somewhat grounded in demographics as these groups have made up a large share (and in the case of Chicana/os, the majority share) of Latinx peoples in the United States. However, as Maritza Cárdenas forcefully argues, “relying on demographics as a way to claim representation follows a state conferred form of recognition” and is troubling as such a practice explicitly links “worthiness” to “numbers” (95). Moreover, this demographic reality does not hold true in different areas of the country. Thus, recent years have seen a growth and dissemination of voices reflecting distinct constituencies and articulations of identity, specifically Central American-Americans, undocumented

Latinx, Afro-Latinxs, and Latinx peoples with roots in South America. These constituencies are by no means mutually exclusive, as Central American-American people may also be Afro-Latinx and/or undocumented, and so on.

The field of Central American-American studies, which began to emerge in the early 2000s, is now well represented by a range of authors and scholars. In developing his definition of Central American-American identity, scholar and novelist Arturo Arias draws not only from academic research but also from the writings of young Central American immigrants themselves. He notes how Marlon Morales, a Salvadoran immigrant, was pressured to assume a Mexican identity, while the poet Maya Chinchilla has discussed feeling “more ‘Central American-American’ than Guatemalan-American” (178, 173). Morales’ recollection from his mother to “always say you’re Mexican” has become a descriptor of Central American-American marginalization and erasure within US Latinx communities. For her part, Chinchilla’s poetry has deftly and invaluablely offered both a terminology for articulating this identity and a meditation on the importance of language and naming. Her poem “Central American-American” asks:

Centralamerican American
Does that come with a hyphen?
...
Where is the center of America, anyway?
...
Am I a CENTRAL
American?
Where is the center of America? (21–22)

Chinchilla’s poem requires that we pause and consider the meaning and implications of terms we may frequently use – what is the Central American’s relationship with America, las Américas, and a larger hemispheric community? The questioning of the term while returning to the issue of the “center of America” foregrounds the inside and outside status of Central American-Americans; as the descriptor indicates, they are a foundational community and yet they are marginalized.

Recent publications by Central American-American authors have focused on issues of migration, identity, and belonging within Latinx and non-Latinx communities in the United States. Cristina Henríquez’s *The Book of Unknown Americans* (2014) focuses on two youth from immigrant families who develop a close relationship based on their shared

outsider status and their close physical proximity in the same apartment complex. Written by a Panamanian-American author, the novel largely explores the experiences of families who hail from two different nations – Mexico and Panama – but includes a larger cast of characters from a variety of immigrant backgrounds. Henríquez’s attention to the experiences of young people is appropriate given recent migration patterns, including the large number of unaccompanied minor children and women who have sought refuge in the United States. While politicians and pundits have spent copious amounts of time discussing the so-called child migrant crisis, an urgent need for the voices of child migrants themselves persists.² Two recent interventions into this situation are Javier Zamora’s collection of poetry *Unaccompanied* and the edited collection *Solito, Solita: Crossing Borders with Youth Refugees from Central America* (edited by Steven Mayers and Jonathan Freedman). Published in 2017, Zamora’s book references aspects of the young Salvadoran-born poet’s life, including his migration through Mexico, Guatemala, and the Sonoran desert to arrive in Arizona. Poems explore the “in-between” identity articulated frequently in Latinx literature while confronting the limitations imposed by state structures. The poem “El Salvador” captures the complex love migrants feel for their homeland:

Salvador, if I return on a summer day, so humid my thumb will clean your beard of salt, and if I touch your volcanic face, kiss your pumice breath, please don’t let cops say: he’s gangster. (11)

While referencing landscapes and experiences specific to Central America, Zamora, like Henríquez also explores the commonalities among immigrants. In his introduction to *Solito, Solita*, the poet places himself within a larger literary genealogy that includes French existentialist writer Albert Camus and immigrant writers Jose Antonio Vargas and Edwidge Danticat. This expansive literary context reveals his desire to affirm the complex lives of young migrants as he urges readers to recall that the voices in the collection are “more than refugees, than child migrants, than people who have experienced trauma” and that they are also individuals who experience joy, love, and laughter (x). Zamora’s important reminder is a valuable frame for *Solito, Solita* and suggests that readers would do well to take in the stories of young migrants, stories more often than not filled with loss and trauma, without ascribing narrow understandings of their lives. This assertion is one that is borne out within the work of other Central American-American writers as well as undocumented and, in particular, undocuqueer writers and cultural workers who

have sought to maintain agency over the articulation of their experiences and resisted being scripted as pathetic, agentless subjects.³

Just as Central American-American peoples have a long history in the United States, Afro-Latinx peoples are not “newcomers” to the United States or Latinx communities. However, recent scholarship and cultural production has illustrated a distinct approach to Blackness and Latinidad. In the edited collection *Manteca! An Anthology of Afro-Latin@ Poets*, Melissa Castillo-Garsow foregrounds the history of interest in Afro-Latinx writers, noting how early discussions of Afro-Latinidad fetishized Blackness or placed its discussion alongside *mestizaje* so as to ignore racism with Latinx communities (xxiv). Thus, while Afro-Latinx writers have been significant contributors to US and Latinx literature for over 100 years, contemporary iterations of this writing and attendant scholarship foreground a new framing of these voices that directly confront anti-Blackness within Latinx communities. Such a perspective is well illustrated in the work of slam poet and author Elizabeth Acevedo. Acevedo’s poem “Afro-Latina” traces the poet’s initial rejection of all things Black and Latino; she mentions embarrassment at her mother’s Spanish and says, “I hated caramel colored skin.” She names a multiracial history and identity – claiming roots in Taíno, Español, Yoruba, Inca, and Maya peoples. In this way, she echoes Corky Gonzales’ Chicano anthem “Yo Soy Joaquín.” As Gonzales wrote:

I am the Maya prince.
I am Nezahualcōyotl, great leader of the Chichimecas.
I am the sword and flame of Cortes the despot . . .
I was both tyrant and slave.

While Gonzales references the enslavement of Indigenous peoples by the conquering Europeans, he never explicitly mentions the trans-Atlantic slave trade that flourished in Latin America. Acevedo directly evokes this history, naming “the children of slaves and slavemasters,” a “beautiful tragic mixture” and “a soncocho of erased history.” Repeating the identity “Afro-Latina,” the speaker names and claims her unique identity, asserting her ability to make something beautiful from a violent and complicated history.

Finally, writers who trace their heritage to nations in South America have made significant contributions to the Latinx literary landscape in recent years. Of particular note are Daisy Hernández and Patricia Engel. Hernández, the daughter of a Colombian mother and Cuban father, is most well known for her 2015 memoir *A Cup of Water Under My Bed*.

Speaking to the experience of multiethnic Latinx families, she describes how the women in her family married “other Latinos”: “Most women stick to their own kind. They base love and their marriages on the lines drawn between countries The women in my family do not believe in such intimacies. My mother married my Cuban father, Tía Rosa settled with a Puerto Rican, and Tía Dora a Peruvian” (74). Hernández also confronts her family’s investment in Whiteness as she details the advice she received to date men who were considered closer to White: “Consider Argentines. They want sex all the time, but most are white, have law degrees, and if they are not Italian, their grandmothers might be” (75). Another daughter of the Colombian diaspora, novelist and short story writer Patricia Engel has published several award-winning novels as well as a collection of short stories. In an interview with Lorena Ochoa, Engel explains her frequent treatment of the experience of exile and dislocation. She explains that she has ties to two nations and cultures that “are often at odds with each other” but that her interest lays in how this conflict may offer freedom such as freeing one from “patriotism and loyalty to a specific country, culture or community” (Vida, 408). Both Hernández and Engel have successfully negotiated the boundaries that often divide US Latinx and Latin American writers. Hernández’s memoir has been translated into Spanish and Engel was the first woman to win the Premio Biblioteca de Narrativa Colombiana for the 2016 translation of *Vida* (originally published in English in 2010). While these successes should not be mistaken for resolution of some of the difficulties US Latinx writers encounter in a Latin American literary landscape (see Engel’s piece in *Cultural Dynamics* for a harrowing discussion of how Latinx writers are sometimes viewed by their Latin American colleagues), they do reflect the transnational circulation of US Latinx texts and authors. In giving voice to Central American-American, Afro-Latinx, undocumented, and Colombian diasporic experience and identities, these texts and authors are transforming our understanding of US Latinx peoples and asserting the importance of these diverse literary voices.

Genre

Long recognized for their abilities to break down commonly demarcated boundaries in terms of content and language, Latinx writers have recently been breaking new ground in their innovative contributions to particular literary genres. Two areas have seen particular growth and concomitant recognition – creative nonfiction and young adult and children’s literature.

These contemporary publications are by no means “new”; for example, Gloria Anzaldúa’s 1989 text *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* was groundbreaking in terms of both its Chicana feminist content and its multi-genre engagement with essay, poetry, and memoir. Anzaldúa also authored several children’s books. The literature discussed in this section reflects work that builds upon the tradition established by Anzaldúa and others and suggests a new dimension of diversity and inclusivity in terms of genre that occurs alongside considerations of the importance of gender and sexuality.

Latinx and Chicanx authors have expanded the topics commonly explored in young adult fiction by touching on issues of gender, sexuality, immigration, and racial identity. Elizabeth Acevedo’s award-winning *The Poet X* is written entirely in verse and in first person from the perspective of Xiomara, a young Dominican-American who struggles to express herself against the strict rules of her religious mother. Xiomara supports and is supported by her twin brother Xavier, himself negotiating a queer identity, and by teachers who encourage her writing of poetry. Xiomara strains against her mother while forging a path for herself in a sexist world where she faces frequent sexual harassment from strangers and peers. In a poem entitled “After,” Xiomara captures the quotidian but traumatic nature of sexual harassment, writing:

It happens when I’m at bodegas.
 It happens when I’m at school.
 It happens when I’m on the train.
 It happens when I’m standing on the platform
 It happens when I’m sitting on the stoop.
 It happens when I’m turning the corner.
 It happens when I forget to be on guard.
 It happens all the time.

The repetition captures the frequency of harassment, while the list of locations and circumstances drives home just how inescapable the abuse is. Xiomara is well aware of how her changing body is viewed by those around her and while she acknowledges that she “should be used to it,” she admits that she never does get used to it (*The Poet X*, 52). In fact, her inability/refusal to acclimate herself to unwanted and inappropriate sexual attention is one of her strengths and she frequently references her own history of resistance, recalling that unlike her brother, her name does not originate from the Bible but rather means “One who is ready for war” (*The Poet X*, 7). *The Poet X* allows readers to witness as Xiomara asserts her full humanity in the face of a hostile world and repressive family life.

Xiomara shares some commonalities with Julia Reyes, the protagonist of Erika K. Sánchez's *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*. Told from the perspective of Julia, the daughter of undocumented Mexican immigrants growing up in Chicago, the novel works through a dark premise – the death of Julia's elder sister Olga, against whose memory and “perfection” she must assert herself. As Julia writes: “I know Amá loves me and always has, but Olga has always been her favorite. Ever since I was a little kid, I've questioned everything . . . [s]tuff that's sexist, for example, makes me crazy” (21). Julia is smart, strong-willed, and much less interested in the fashion and dating that mesmerize her best friend, Lorena. As such, she is a Chicana nerd who provides a welcome antidote to “the tendency of mainstream culture to portray Chicanas and Latinas as hyper-sexualized and ‘hot’” (Herrera 308). The text captures the cultural and generational confrontations well known to many children of immigrants as Julia would rather be discussing *The Awakening* than attending her own *quinceañera*, but the novel manages to be both familiar and fresh. Julia chafes against her mother's strict rules but understands their and her relationship to racial hierarchies in the USA: “Like my parents, I've always been suspicious of white people, because they're the ones who call immigration . . . who follow you when you're shopping” (167). Julia's experience illustrates the difficult, sometimes self-destructive, journey of a young working-class woman attempting to draw strength from her family without succumbing to traditional and restrictive notions of femininity.

While Julia's status as the US citizen daughter of immigrant parents captures the complex inheritance of first-generation children, Reyna Grande's memoir explores immigration from the child's point of view. The text focuses on young Reyna and her siblings Mago and Carlos, who face poverty and deprivation in their hometown of Iguala, Guerrero, Mexico. They eventually join their father in California but cross without documentation, something that they do not fully understand. Speaking to the experience of migration and marginalization from the child's point of view is important and the success of Grande's work (the original version of the memoir has been adopted for university-wide reading programs at dozens of universities) reflects the hunger for this perspective from the standpoint of readers. Grande's ability to discuss the traumas associated with poverty and lack of documentation is also unfortunately necessary as the USA and the world grapple with the reality and after-effects of inhumane immigration policies that punish migrants, separate infants from their parents, and have led to the deaths of nearly half a dozen children in the custody of the US border patrol in the last few years.

Acevedo's, Sánchez's, and Grande's texts fulfill the feminist politics embedded in the term "Latinx" via their discussions of gender and female sexuality. Bringing the queer and Indigenous orientations of the term to a younger audience, Ernesto Javier Martínez's bilingual book *Cuando Amamos Cantamos* (*When We Love Someone, We Sing to Them*) explores queer sexuality. The book is based on Martínez's own childhood singing with his family trio and tells the story of a boy who learns to sing serenatas with this father but searches for a song that a boy can sing to a boy. He asks his dad for help singing a "butterfly song, for a boy in town, for a boy bright brown" (20). After his father cannot think of a song about two boys in love, he decides to write one for his son. Beautifully illustrated by Maya González, the text draws from Indigenous Mexican traditions via references to Xochipilli, the Nahua god of creativity, and *papalotl*/butterflies. The book affirms the importance of creating stories in which queer Latinx children can see themselves and their families while imagining inclusive futures.

Writers such as Acevedo, Sánchez, and Martínez draw from their own lives and experiences in crafting their work, a process made more explicit by creative nonfiction writers such as Grande. The field of Latinx creative nonfiction has grown significantly and two texts in particular showcase how authors are taking the genre in new directions. Hernández's memoir, discussed earlier in the context of Colombian-American literature, is also notable for the ways in which it weaves history, politics, and current events within the story of her life and that of her parents. In the compelling chapter "Queer Narratives," Hernández recalls dating a trans man alongside the story of the life and brutal murder of a young Chicana trans woman, Gwen Araujo. Also tackling social and political history alongside her own life, Stephanie Elizondo Griest's *All the Agents and Saints: Dispatches from the U.S. Borderlands* is partly an exploration into her own earlier life experiences, wrestling with understanding how things such as growing up near oil refineries impacted her life and health. She explains that after decades of traveling she felt "the magnetic pull of home" and returned to South Texas to understand how "the liminal space between nations created an inner fissure" in her as well (2, 3). The book follows Elizondo Griest as she seeks to reconcile – or, in her words, fuse – the disparate parts of her ethnic identity (Chicana/White) with her religious one (agnostic/Catholic) and a growing consciousness that her origins in the USA/Mexico borderlands have shaped her more than she had imagined. The book took even more personal turns because after delving into the environmental and health devastation in the region where she was born

and raised, the author found herself battling ovarian cancer in late 2017 (just months after *All the Agents and Saints* was published). She is now in remission and she dubbed her early 2018 tour in support of the book the “Resurrection Tour.”

By infusing children’s and young adult literature with important discussions of race, gender, sexuality, and immigration, Acevedo, Sánchez, Grande, and Martínez fulfill the queer positive and feminist commitments of the term “Latinx.” This commitment shines through as well in Hernández and Elizondo Griest’s work via their exploration of complex iterations of Latinidad and their feminist approaches to identity, family, health, and personal relationships. At the same time, this innovative work in the fields of young adult literature and creative nonfiction suggests another facet of Latinx literary production and manner of further breaking down boundaries, this time the boundaries between young adult and adult literature and between fiction and nonfiction.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at new, significant, and innovative work in the fields of Chicanx and Latinx thought and cultural production. Debates about terminology, attention to previously overlooked identities and communities, and the exploration of literary genres speak to the diversity of Chicanx and Latinx literature and studies during our current moment. Discussions about language, representation, and power are not unique to Latinx and Chicanx studies but reflect the extent to which these fields are in conversation with ongoing and developing issues around ethnic identity, White supremacy, and gender as well as the legacies of colonialism, military intervention, and continued racism, xenophobia, transphobia, and other oppressions within the United States and around the world. Taken together, this body of literature and scholarship showcases the depth and diversity of Latinx and Chicanx thought and highlights how this body of literature and scholarship responds to and offers new ways of thinking about issues of race, gender, sexuality, and inequality.

Notes

1. We can also point out the inaccuracy of suggesting that the descendants of Indigenous people are “part of” Latinx peoples; *mestizaje* is a colonial construct and some would argue that the identity of “Latinx” is in need of decolonization to fully account for and acknowledge indigeneity.

2. To be clear, the “migrant crisis” is not the migration of people from Central America; it is the way those migrants are treated by the Mexican and US border patrol.
3. See, for example, Maya Chinchilla’s poem “Solidarity Baby” in which the speaker details the legacy of US intervention in Central America but uses a child’s viewpoint to explore a more nuanced subjectivity. The insistence that undocumented Latinx migrants are not people to be pitied or saved is articulated forcefully in the work of artists Yosimar Reyes and Julio Salgado; see the conclusion of Vigil’s *Public Negotiations* for a discussion of their work and perspective.

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