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Editors' Note: The Name of las Cosas

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Editors' Note

The Name of las Cosas

Ambientes: New Queer Latino Writing seeks to provide a timely and representative archive of queer Latino literary and cultural memory in order to enact a more inclusive “American” literary canon that can apprehend the present and the future of queer Latino literary practice. We have assembled a diverse and representative sample of contemporary queer Latino writing in order to provide a source of pleasure for readers as well as a resource for instructors and students who have too often been deprived of this crucial though underanalyzed component of national literary culture.

Consistent with our belief that Spanish is not a foreign language in the United States, we have not italicized words in Spanish. Those words that do appear in the anthology in italics, whether in Spanish or not, have been italicized by the authors and usually connote emphasis but not a different linguistic register or the notion that Spanish is a foreign language in this country. In keeping with standard Spanish grammatical usage, the singular “Latino” or plural “Latinos” in the preface and the introduction refer to both sexes and allow us to avoid the graphically more sluggish “Latina/o,” “Latina/os,” or “Latin@s.” In doing so we also suggest the obvious: to believe that graphic characters can reform inequality, linguistic or otherwise, is a fatuous proposition if structural inequalities are not concomitantly addressed. Further, taking Spanish seriously in the United States requires understanding its structures, its speakers, the colonial legacies that haunt both, and why Spanish continues to be classed as “inferior.” When we consider that the United States is the third-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world (out of twenty-one countries whose official language is Spanish plus the U.S. territory of Puerto Rico), then we must confront the language issue with urgency and creativity.

In both the preface and the introduction we refer to Latinos as persons of Latin American ancestry living in the United States. Certainly, Spanish is not the only language in Latin America, but regrettably

majority culture still incorrectly racializes and classes many Latinos as “foreign,” and, too often, as just Spanish speaking (read: “Mexican”). When we consider that, aside from Mexican and Central American migration and immigration to the United States, Brazilians constitute the third-largest migrant or immigrant group, then it becomes expedient to include Brazilians—who often have to learn Spanish and, eventually, English to enter local economies—under the admittedly less than precise but necessary rubric “Latino.”

We received many fine submissions for this anthology in both English and Spanish. The best of both were included in *Ambientes*. Those submitted in Spanish have been translated into English in order to entice a broader readership into seeking out the Spanish originals, perhaps even encouraging them to learn the other unofficial national language. As readers demand more of queer Latino writing and cultural production, we hope that the Latino Brazilian experience also makes its way into the futures of Latino literary and cultural production.

Finally, we hope you enjoy reading *Ambientes: New Queer Latino Writing*. Please visit the book’s website for research ideas, additional readings, links to authors’ websites, as well as teaching suggestions and class projects based on *Ambientes*: www.myambientes.com.