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I respectfully dedicate this book to my parents, Luis F. Rivera and Carmen D. Vega, for their conscientious choice to create a home full of Puerto Rican tradition in diaspora and for always supporting and nurturing my diasporic spirit in constant *vaivén*, now resettled in Borinquén.

To my husband—Axel I. López—for our migrations and return migration, for his loving companionship and support.

CARMEN HAYDÉE

To my mother, Marcelina Padilla, who worked in sweatshops to knit my dreams, *con mucho amor y aprecio*.

To my wife, Lee, and sons, Alex and Julian, who anchor me in *el vaivén*, with my deepest love.

JOSÉ LUIS

PART II *Political and Historical*

- 4 Anarchism in the Work of Aurora Levins Morales 107
FERDÂ ASYA
- 5 Puerto Rican Literature in a New Clave: Notes on the Emergence
of DiaspoRican 125
WILLIAM BURGOS
- 6 The Political Left and the Development of Nuyorican Poetry 143
TRENTON HICKMAN

PART III *Identity and Place*

- 7 Literary Tropicalizations of the Barrio: Ernesto Quiñonez's
Bodega Dreams and Ed Vega's *Mendoza's Dreams* 165
ANTONIA DOMÍNGUEZ MIGUELA
- 8 Discordant Differences: Strategic Puerto Ricanness in Pedro
Pietri's *Puerto Rican Obituary* 184
VÍCTOR FIGUEROA
- 9 "Borinkee" in Hawai'i: Rodney Morales Rides the Diaspora
Wave to Transregional Imperial Struggle 201
MARITZA STANCHICH
- 10 Tato Laviera's Parody of *La carreta*: Reworking a Tradition
of Docility 221
JOHN WALDRON

PART IV *Home*

- 11 Writing Home: Mapping Puerto Rican Collective Memory
in *The House on the Lagoon* 239
KELLI LYON JOHNSON
- 12 Translating "Home" in the Work of Judith Ortiz Cofer 256
JOANNA BARSZEWSKA MARSHALL
- 13 Getting There and Back: The Road, the Journey, and Home
in Nuyorican Diaspora Literature 274
SOLIMAR OTERO

PART V *Gender*

- 14 Identity of the "Diasporican" Homosexual in the Literary
Periphery 295
ENRIQUE MORALES-DÍAZ
- 15 Manuel Ramos Otero's Queer Metafictional Resurrection
of Julia de Burgos 313
BETSY A. SANDLIN
- 16 Subverting the Mainland: Transmigratory Biculturalism
in U.S. Puerto Rican Women's Fiction 332
MARY JANE SUERO-ELLIOTT

Contributors 351

Index 355

7 LITERARY TROPICALIZATIONS OF THE BARRIO

*Ernesto Quiñonez's Bodega Dreams and Ed Vega's
Mendoza's Dreams*

ANTONIA DOMÍNGUEZ MIGUELA

From the first stages of Puerto Rican migration to the United States, the urban barrios, especially East Harlem in New York, represented the new existential space for the Puerto Rican diaspora. Early writings by and about Puerto Ricans in New York, like Jesús Colón's *A Puerto Rican in New York* and Bernardo Vega's *Memorias de Bernardo Vega*, already described the barrios as a space constantly transformed by the arrival of a growing number of Puerto Ricans.¹ The massive migration in the fifties established "the barrio" as the predominant space of arrival for Puerto Ricans. It was also in the forties and fifties when conditions in the barrio helped to develop a negative vision of this new ethnic ghetto. Island authors were aware of the situation and destiny of thousands of Puerto Rican migrants, as evidenced by the publication of works dealing with Puerto Rican lives in the northern barrios: Guillermo Cotto-Thorner's *Trópico en Manhattan*; René Marqués's *La carreta*, Pedro Juan Soto's *Ardiente suelo, fría estación* and *Spiks*.²

During the sixties and seventies, a group of Puerto Rican activists, poets, and playwrights living in the barrio began to describe that Puerto Rican experience from inside and from a critical perspective. They developed what would be called a *Nuyorican* aesthetics and literature deeply concerned with the community's living conditions and its daily fight for survival. With the Young Lords, a community-oriented organi-

images and signifieds from a Latin American culture. The linguistic pun and the intrusion of objects and images alien to the American landscape allow the creation of a defamiliarized world within the barrio and the urban space, which are therefore transformed and permeated by Puerto Rican rhythms, traces, and values. See his *Tropicalization* (New York: Reed, Cannon and Johnson, 1976).

25. Frances Aparicio and Susana Chávez-Silverman, introduction to Aparicio and Chávez-Silverman, *Tropicalizations*, 8.
26. Quiñonez, *Bodega Dreams*, 31.
27. *Ibid.*, 161.
28. *Ibid.*, 36.
29. *Ibid.*, 213.
30. Quiñonez, *Mendoza's Dreams*, 148.
31. *Ibid.*, 117.
32. *Ibid.*, 124.
33. Frances Aparicio, "On Subversive Signifiers: U.S. Latina/o Writers Tropicalize English," *American Literature* 66 (Dec. 1994): 797.
34. Ed Vega, *Mendoza's Dreams*, 76.
35. *Ibid.*, 175.
36. *Ibid.*, 144.
37. Quiñonez, *Bodega Dreams*, 211.
38. *Ibid.*, 212.

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