THIS BOOK IS PUBLISHED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF A GRANT FROM THE STROUM BOOK FUND, ESTABLISHED THROUGH THE GENEROSITY OF SAMUEL AND ALTHEA STROUM.

© 2008 by the University of Washington Press
Printed in the United States of America
Designed by Pamela Canell
13 12 11 10 09 08 5 4 3 2 1

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University of Washington Press, PO Box 50096, Seattle, WA 98145-5096 U.S.A.
www.washington.edu/uwpress

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Writing off the hyphen : new critical perspectives on the literature of the Puerto Rican diaspora / edited by José L. Torres-Padilla and Carmen Haydée Rivera.
p. cm. — (American ethnic and cultural studies)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-295-98813-9 (hardback : alk. paper)
ISBN 978-0-295-98824-5 (paperback : alk. paper)
1. American literature—Puerto Rican authors—History and criticism.
2. Puerto Ricans—United States—Intellectual life. 3. Puerto Rican literature—History and criticism. 4. Puerto Ricans in literature. I. Torres-Padilla, José L.
II. Rivera, Carmen Haydée.
PS153P83W75 2008 810.9'97295—dc22 2007040823

The paper used in this publication is acid-free and 90 percent recycled from at least 50 percent post-consumer waste. It meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984.

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

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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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