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(e.g., “La familia, the family, is the primary socializing agent for all family members…. For Latinos, familismo…is considered one of the most important culture-specific values,” p. 45). Perhaps this is the main weakness of many of the chapters in this laudable collaborative volume. In its effort to celebrate Latina girls, the book tends to substitute static negative models (e.g., high school dropouts, pregnant teens) for positive but equally static views of Latina “empowerment,” a concept that, incidentally, is never really deconstructed. Except for a brief disclaimer in the introduction, most chapters lack a nuanced analysis of issues concerning differences of class background, race, nationality, geographical context, or migrant versus U.S.-born generations.

The book is presented as a counterbalance to traditional mental health literature that has been historically biased toward “cultural deficiency” models. This is an admirable goal. Nevertheless, the strategy which the editors adopt (and which they insist their contributors adopt as well, as the editors themselves state) tends to be one of uncritical celebration of Latina girls’ “resilience,” “empowerment,” and “strength.” It seems as if the girls whose voices appear in this volume are entirely unrelated or unaffected by those who do get pregnant, might be in gangs, or drop out of school, rather than as part of the same political economy that tends to subordinate women and racial minorities and of which these situations are symptomatic. Couldn’t we assume that “girls in gangs” also “care about school” or that diligent girls who do well in school may not like their families? Can we envision scenarios that capture the complexity of human experience without having to use broad brushes to characterize, or even defend, the living conditions of individual girls? As an inspirational project, the book meets its goals, by suspending a more multifaceted examination of the complexity that is likely to characterize all girls’ lives. Perhaps it would have been helpful if the co-editors had explored the possibility that any developmental model that draws upon “culture” as a determinant of difference might be inherently flawed, no matter whether the views of concepts like “marianismo” are seen as detrimental or empowering.

Puerto Rican Poetry, An Anthology from Aboriginal to Contemporary Times
Edited and Translated by Roberto Márquez
Amherst/Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007
490 pages; $28.95 [paper]
REVIEWER: Alan West-Durán, Northeastern University

According to the author, this excellent anthology of Puerto Rican poetry grew out of the need to have an English-language edition for classroom use of the island’s poetry that was comprehensive by encompassing the country’s entire history. Previous work has focused on the 20th century, or Nuyorican poetry, exclusively island-based poets, or of boricua poets in New York, as in Pedro López Adorno’s anthology of 1991. Marquez’s anthology is ambitious because it covers everything over half a millennium, with close to seventy known authors, more than two hundred poems, mini-biographical essays, a detailed chronology, and a short but useful bibliography.

Márquez divides the anthology into four books: the first is “Before and After Columbus,” which covers from 1400–1820; and the second is called “The Creole Matrix: Notions of Nation,” which concerns the years 1821 to 1950. Books Three
“Critique, Revolt, and Renewal”) and Four (“Of Diasporas, Syncretisms, Border Crossings and Transnationalizations: An AmeRícan Sancocho”) are post-1950, the former focused more on island-based writers, the latter on authors rooted in the U.S. and overwhelmingly (but not exclusively) writing in English. Within these titles there are subheadings that are useful as well.

There are few scholars who could have pulled this off with the erudition, wit, and sensibility that Roberto Márquez has. In addition, he did most of the translations. His introduction has an extraordinary definition of translation, which borrows Haroldo de Campos’s term transcreation and claims that a translator needs both humility and audacity, and to be, in turn, a linguist, anthropologist, musician, actor, historian, and, of course, writer (xxvii). In this regard, the anthology is a tour de force as translation, what we would expect from someone who has translated Nicolás Guillén so admirably.

Márquez’s skill can be seen in his renderings of Luis Palés Matos, the one Puerto Rican poet designed to drive translators either to drink or to insanity. His Afro-Antillean verses, from his classic work Tun tun de pasa y grifería (1937), features a rich amalgam of rhythms, words, and images that are daunting to recreate in English. In “Mulata Antilla,” one of Pales’s signature poems, Márquez navigates through the images gracefully (with some minor—very minor—moments). In his poem “Festival Song to Be Wept,” he has opted to keep certain words in their original, like ñánigo, burundunga, bachata, which was probably wise, since they are words of tremendous musicality, but ultimately leaves the reader who is unfamiliar with these terms at the mercy of the professor, who needs to explain them to students. This is always a problem with Palés, who needs a glossary to accompany his poems. In the same poem, the second verse is usually rendered as follows: “Haiti — voodoo and gourd.” Now the gourd is from Pales’s calabaza, and presumably Palés is referring to the sacred rattle, the asson, made from a gourd, handled by vodou priests or priestesses, a potent symbol of their power to mediate between the spirit and material worlds. Even though the phrase “voodoo and gourd” has an alliterative allure, I wonder whether rattle or even holy rattle (blessed rattle? sacred rattle?) might make more sense, given the entire context of the poem.

In the case of Fortunato Vizacarrondo, Márquez’s translation of his classic lyric about racial passing, “¿Y tu agüela, a’onde ejtá?” (“En Yo Granma, Where She At?”) flows beautifully and idiomatically. Márquez captures the cadences, nuance, humor, and sass in just the right proportions.

To his credit, Márquez not only features the high poetic tradition but also popular traditions as well, including coplas, décimas, and bombas. The section is called “Vox Populi,” appropriately enough. His rendition of the décima “How Sad a Lone Dove and the Tone” rhymes perfectly without making the translation sound forced. I’m also tempted to say he should have included a couple of songs by Tite Curet Alonso, but given the legal battles around the late composer’s works, we would still be waiting for the permissions. (Conversely some of the included poems, such as “Puerto Rican on the Moon” and “In Life It’s Always Going,” both by Corretjer, have become well-known and beloved songs).

The anthology takes us through the colonial period with the likes of López de Haro’s little gem from 1644 to the splendid but uneven 1816 poem by Rodríguez Calderón, which sings to the beauty and enchantment of the island, certainly a theme that will become recurrent in the island’s literature. The selections for the nineteenth century begin to illuminate a budding nationalist consciousness as well as a certain
Costumbrismo, which we see in Manuel Alonso. This section is handled skillfully, but I would point out a couple of omissions, one of authors, the other thematic.

In terms of authors it might have been wise to include Alejandro Tapia y Rivera (1828-1882), arguably the island's premiere literary figure of the 19th century, along with Hostos. Tapia was not known for his poetry, but his La sataniada (1878) merits an excerpt since the length of the poem (a whopping 8,194 verses!) would take up half of this anthology. Another option for Tapia would be to include “El último borincano,” which would also introduce the indigenous or neoindigenous theme that held sway over certain poets in the 19th century, such as Daniel de Rivera. Cuba and the Dominican Republic also had neoindigenist fads, the prime example being Galvan’s Enriquillo (1884). What is interesting about this literature, particularly in Puerto Rico, is how it can be nationalistic (and anticolonialist) on the one hand, but evasive of the island’s racial realities on the other, by going back to a pre-Columbian “paradise.” Consequently, it has been able to evade the racial realities of the island (its increasing African descendant population, which only began to wane with the ending of slavery and the different migrations that tried to whiten the island).

The bulk of the anthology features poets from the twentieth, with the most recent poems from 2003. We have the “Tradition, Trauma, and Transition” poets such as Domínguez, Padilla de Sanz, de Diego, Virgilio Dávila, and Luis Lloréns Torres, who are then followed by perhaps the most radically heterogeneous group of poets, from Clara Lair to Francisco Matos Paoli. This section, called “Mystics, Negristas, Vanguardistas, and Nationalists” also includes Riberá Chevremont, Palés, Clemente Soto Vélez, Juan Antonio Corretjer, Julia de Burgos, Violeta López Suria, and Carmen María Cónon Pellot. The poets range from experimental (Soto Vélez) to mystical (Matos Paoli), to afroantillanistas (Palés, Colón, de Burgos), nationalistic (virtually all of them). Some straddle all of these, like Julia de Burgos.

The next section (“Critique, Revolt, and Renewal”) includes a generation of poets born between 1933 and 1954, including the likes of Hugo Margenat, Rosario Ferré, Olga Nolla, Manuel Ramos Otero, Hjalmar Flax, José Luis Vega, Vanessa Droz, among others. Again, the voices are just as varied and complex, ranging from ardently political verse, to introspective meditations, to erotic explorations, as well as poems about AIDS. To this group I would add José María Lima (1934–), somewhere between a surrealist and a mathematician, Iván Silén (1944–), an Artaudian poet who pushed the limit beyond the limit, and the playful, irreverent, and loquacious Joserramón Melendes (1952–), otherwise known as Che Melendes.

The final section includes the diaspora and deals with issues of identity, border crossings, jíbaros in Manhattan, and Nuyorican on the island mixing it all up, with most of the work in English, but also in Spanglish, as well as work that switches from English to Spanish to Spanglish all within the same poem. Of course, there are classics like Pietri’s “Puerto Rican Obituary” and Tato Laviera’s “AmeRícan,” but there are many delightful works in this section, from Rosario Morales’s “Getting Out Alive” to the work of Alba Ambert, sharp, sensual, and totally unsentimental.

The chronology at the end bears mentioning. For those unfamiliar with Puerto Rican history, this chronology includes great historical and political information, as well as information about Puerto Rican literature, and not just its poetry. True to his vision, Márquez includes pertinent information about Puerto Rican culture, life, and history in the U.S. as well.
Márquez has managed to give us a true anthology of Puerto Rican poetry, one that avoids the twin pitfalls of previous efforts that either saw the island production as the most significant (ignoring U.S.-based work) or rejected the sometimes stifling canon from more traditional island approaches. Here poets took the opposite road, claiming that mainland production (mostly, but not always in English) was the more vibrant, innovative, and representative of “lo puertorriqueño.” Márquez clearly shows that one cannot exist without the other. Perhaps that’s why he included the wonderful poem “Child of the Americas” by Aurora Levins Morales: “I am not African. Africa is in me, but I cannot return. I am not taino. Taino is in me, but there is no way back. / I am not European. Europe lives in me, but I have no home there. / I am new. History made me. / My first language was spanglish / I was born at the crossroads / and I am whole.” Puerto Rican poetry is a historical, existential, linguistic, and cultural crossroads. We make our own light by wandering.

**Boricua Power: A Political History of Puerto Ricans in the United States**

By José Ramón Sánchez
304 pages; $24.00 [paper]

**REVIEWER:** ALDO LAURIA SANTIAGO, Rutgers: The State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick

This book has posed quite a challenge to this reviewer. Its goals are very important. It makes many contributions along the way, and it will inevitably lead to fertile discussions—it will be difficult for any reader interested in the Puerto Rican experience in the U.S. not to be affected by its enthusiasm and its engagement with the critical issues. But in some fundamental ways the book fails to provide a coherent analysis, either as history or as social science.

I’ll first discuss what I think are the book’s main contributions and then address what I think are its main problems. *Boricua Power* is an attempt to provide an over-arching explanation for the failure of Puerto Ricans in New York to consistently hold on to any significant quantum of power. The author provides cursory critiques of why past explanations for these failures are inadequate. The book, despite the title, focuses only on the Puerto Rican experience in New York, and seeks to show that Puerto Ricans have never been passive agents despite the failure to gain much social power.

In its first chapter the text reviews and in most cases rejects the different strands of social theory and political science approaches that have been used to explain the social origins of power as well as specific debates on the status of Puerto Ricans. These critiques are often insightful but other times seem arbitrary and superficial. In the end, the author proposes an alternative conceptual framework best summarized here as the “dance” theory of social-symbolic power. The “dance” theory is presented in the first chapter and in fragments throughout the rest of the book. It is not easy to summarize this approach, and at time it seems like the author is striving to conceptualize what is the normal modus operandi of anthropologists and historians, that is, the study of historically contingent and culturally constructed alliances. So I’ll let the author’s own words do this work, but ultimately readers will have to decide for themselves.
Puerto Rican language use on Myspace.com Kevin Carroll. Lengua, poder y estrategias en los tribunales de justicia: análisis discursivo de cuatro vistas para determinación de causa en el tribunal de San Juan de Puerto Rico Aida Vergne. The mandatory use of English in the federal court of Puerto Rico Alicia Pousada. María Vaquero y el desarrollo de la lingüística hispánica en Puerto Rico Marías Castro. Other essays. Puerto Rican Poetry, An Anthology from Aboriginal to Contemporary Times Edited and Translated by Roberto Márquez Reviewed by Alan West-Durán. Boricua Power: A Political History of Puerto Ricans in the United States By José Ramón Sánchez Reviewed by Aldo Lauria Santiago. SOUTH HADLEY, Mass.--In January, the University of Massachusetts Press published Puerto Rican Poetry: An Anthology from Aboriginal to Contemporary Times, edited and translated by Roberto Márquez, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Latin American and Caribbean Studies at Mount Holyoke College. It offers the most wide-ranging and comprehensive collection of Puerto Rican poetry available in English and includes the work of 64 poets, many of the poems appearing for the first time in English. It also includes previously inaccessible selections from Puerto Rico's tradition of popular verse form.