Puerto Rico is commonly described as a bicultural society, a cockpit where Hispanic, or "Latin," and North American ways of life are being mediated each to the other. In a poll of local opinion this crossroads or meeting-place role might well be acclaimed the island's outstanding characteristic. Further questioning might disclose that few Puerto Ricans have serious misgivings, few conscious ones at least, about this "hybridization." It seems to be widely held that a new society that combines Catholic piety, warm traditions of familialism, respect for womanhood, and individualism of a spiritual and esthetic sort on one hand with the drive, material achievement and comfort, and organizational efficiency of the Yankee business world on the other is in gestation. Indeed, this eventual society is not best described as "bicultural," for the Hispanic tradition is to supply the "culture," while the United States will furnish methods, technology, money for pump priming, and a market of 180 million people. At a recent University of Puerto Rico seminar on development the economists seemed to agree that the island's future economic success lies in integration with the American economy. Then came the loaded question: Will Puerto Ricans stop speaking Spanish? The answer: Of course not. Culturally, we will always be 100 percent Hispanic.

Deceptive Transformation (1960)
The attempt to explain Puerto Rican culture and institutions as an intersection of two streams of ready-made national characteristics is singularly unpersuasive. While this essay cannot pretend to offer a full description of contemporary Puerto Rican society, it does advance a critique of any “two strains” analysis that treats the interaction of the two strains in isolation from four and a half centuries of Puerto Rican history.

First, it is clear that neither Spanish society nor any fragment of it was replicated in Puerto Rico. Less transplantation occurred in Puerto Rico than in most of the Spanish Indies. The elaborate civil and ecclesiastical hierarchies of Mexico and Peru, the missions of the religious orders, the colleges and universities—in short, the formal institutional bases of Spanish culture—were weak or lacking in Puerto Rico. In 1765 there were sixty-eight priests on the island for a population of forty-five thousand. Of the sixty-eight, only twenty-six were parish priests outside the city of San Juan.¹

In Puerto Rico, the general weakness of the Church in dealing with religious heterodoxy, together with its inadequate personnel and sheer physical inability to reach the people, made its religious ministrations rather ineffective. . . . The people frequently did not attend mass, obtain sacraments, confess, pay tithes, marry in church, or baptize, even under the pain of excommunication. Religious heterodoxy in local belief has probably existed since the sixteenth century.²

Neither the city nor the latifundio, the two main instruments of Spanish colonization elsewhere, was important in Puerto Rico. San Juan was a small, “tightly huddled community, surrounded by its rings of walls and imposing fortresses,” while the “rest of the island was left pretty much to itself.”³ The encomienda played little role in organizing rural society because the Indian labor force soon dwindled to extinction. Relatively few Africans were imported to replace the Indians. In 1777, of the island population of seventy thousand only seventy-five hundred were slaves. Before the nineteenth century sugar had a fitful career because of high production costs. More successful were ginger- and cattle-raising, which did not require complex techniques or regimentation and were suited for the island’s flourishing contraband trade. Most of the population were isolated subsistence farmers, “not yet concentrated to any appreciable extent in what can be called communities or villages.”⁴

The O’Reilly report of 1765 gives the following vignette of society:

The origin and main cause of the extremely slight progress of the island of Puerto Rico is the lack thus far of a propitious political regime, and its settlement by soldiers too accustomed to military life for reducing themselves to working in the fields. To these were later added a number of vagrants, deck hands, and sailors who deserted from each ship that put in there. These people, by nature indolent and quite beyond control by the government, scat-
tered through the fields and forests, where they built miserable huts. With four plantains that they sowed, the wild fruit they found, and the cows that soon abounded in the mountains, they had milk, greens, fruit, and some meat. On this they lived and still live.

A few years later Abbad y Lasierra emphasized the subsistence nature of agriculture and its primitive technology; the reliance on roots and fish after hurricanes because no food supply was laid up; the rapid turnover in land use because no measures were taken to renew the soil; the tendency to farm only flat land and cultivate simple crops, whether or not they were the most profitable. It was expensive to transport produce to San Juan for marketing, and governors forbade coastal trade for fear of illicit commerce with other islands. Lack of a coastguard, however, allowed foreign ships to trade at many coastal points, so that much of the trade that existed was contraband, and the island itself was not internally knit by commerce.

In its formative period, then, Puerto Rico did not become a strongly organized society. On one hand it lacked the fixed class distinctions, the urban and rural centers of social gravity, the pomp and pageantry, the sanctums of learning and faith, that characterize a traditional and layered society. On the other hand human and material conditions could not sustain the spontaneous spirit of organization and thrift that characterizes a flourishing class of independent farmers or urban merchants. The energies for social cohesion were neither transplanted nor locally generated.

The nineteenth century brought sweeping institutional changes, but the fact that they continued on many fronts throughout the century precluded a strengthening and decisive patterning of social organization. Some of the principal changes were population increase, commercial and urban growth, the increase in cultivated land, a decline in subsistence agriculture and a shift to export crops, concentration of landholding, industrialization of sugar production, and increasing commercial dependence on the United States. The agents of change were usually outsiders, starting with immigrant sugar entrepreneurs from Louisiana, the Dominican Republic, and Venezuela.

Two traits of Puerto Rican society on the eve of the American occupation deserve emphasis. First, mechanization and centralization of sugar production were already industrializing the island. Even before slavery was abolished in 1873, the main source of labor in the cane fields was a proletariat of landless resident workers (agregados) and free migratory workers. The industrial world was, therefore, already a powerful force when the island passed under American rule. Second, in the latter part of the nineteenth century most inhabitants resided in the rural highlands. These mountain dwellers did not cluster their houses but lived scattered across the knolls and slopes. In other words, rural folk who were
still untouched by industrialized agriculture perpetuated only a residual semblance of the rich socioreligious traditions of Spanish culture.

I am not suggesting that in 1898 Puerto Rico was “cultureless” (after all, no anthropologist would let me get away with it). I freely grant that the texture of Hispanic culture was omnipresent, and here I will not cavil at stereotypes about machismo, virgin complexes, devotional attitudes, aversion to abstract thinking, even Spanish “individualism.” The point is that Hispanic culture in nineteenth-century Puerto Rico neither nourished nor fed upon the pragmatic and weakly organized institutional life of the island. If one encountered vigorous jíbaro types, it was more likely the wisdom of the soil than the wisdom of the race that made them so.

As many interpreters have been at pains to point out, Puerto Rico has had a passive history. It has been victimized by violence from without (hurricanes, buccaneers, and French, Dutch, and British invaders). And it has depended for sustenance and change on more highly organized institutions and societies abroad: the situado (a financial subsidy from viceregal Mexico); contraband trade with Europeans and with the plantation islands of the Lesser Antilles; skills, capital, and organization for industrialization from the United States. This historical career is partly attributable to mere geography: a small island with scarce resources located so strategically as to be of constant concern to the world’s leading sea powers. But internal causes are also important.

Puerto Rican institutions as fragmentarily described here have not been such as to allow the emergence of group identities. Rituals of celebration, devotion, and community expression; publicly acknowledged gradations of social hierarchy; conditions for forming and mechanisms for managing group antagonisms; autonomous centers of economic change—such sources of cohesion were but weakly developed. This helps to explain why “docility” is so frequently ascribed to Puerto Ricans as a national characteristic. Wrote the Puerto Rican social thinker Salvador Brau in 1882:

Precisely one of the most notable traits of Puerto Rican character is docility. A docile people by nature, it has gone far on the road to civilization. One needs only to know how to lead it. It is true that, in spite of their absolute respect for authority, one notices among our working classes, especially in the farm women, a certain recalcitrant tendency, a certain reserve which hinders moralizing action. But that tendency, which encourages the scattering of neighborhoods across the countryside, had its origin in the administrative regime itself, in accordance with a special policy at certain times.8

Now, docility has never been a conspicuous ingredient of Spanish character. Brau’s opinion that it is a Puerto Rican trait squares with our generalization that a weak institutional fabric, combining with accidents of geography and history, has caused Puerto Ricans to look elsewhere
than to their own initiative, resources, and organizational powers for improvement of their lot. Going further, we may predict certain features of a society on the lookout for external deliverance: (1) its powers of self-appraisal and self-criticism will be retarded; (2) lacking a self-image forged in the conflict of internal pressures, it will fall prey to fantasies; (3) its members will find it hard to identify public targets on which to vent the aggressiveness that any society harbors.

Having warned against viewing Puerto Rico as a tropical replica of old Castile, let us briefly characterize the U.S. impact. Here I cheerfully accept clichés about American teamwork, pragmatism, faith in material achievement, and emotional inhibitions. And having granted Spanish individualism, I grant American individualism as well. But in all candor, I'm stymied once I've collated the alleged American traits with the alleged Spanish ones. I therefore address the morphology rather than the ontology of culture contact.

If England conquered her empire in a fit of absent-mindedness, the United States has administered hers in that fashion. A self-proclaimed New World democracy that still retains “colonial” attitudes vis-à-vis Europe could hardly be expected to be a confident colonial power. Americans in fact have never called Puerto Rico a colony; they have never known what to call it. I would imagine that the greatest source of perplexity to a foreign people trying to adjust to administration by the United States would be the open-endedness of American culture and institutions. We pride ourselves on being in “permanent revolution.” Ours is an energetic but certainly not an “achieved” culture. In confrontation with other peoples, Americans offer little by way of paradigms and much by way of outlook and technique. Abraham Flexner once remarked that America flounders in chaos in the absence of “centralized and intelligently directed authority and the lack of institutions which possess and may be counted on to maintain ideals.”

Nowhere are the inconclusive effects of American administration better reflected than in Puerto Rico's school system. In 1898 there was no university on the island, and of Puerto Ricans over ten years old only one in five could read and write. Today there are three universities, and the University of Puerto Rico alone has eighteen thousand full- and part-time students. Four in five of the inhabitants over ten read and write. It took decades, however, even to establish the official language of instruction. The worst influences of American teachers colleges long dominated Puerto Rican pedagogy: school and university curricula are weak in content and discipline, little selectivity is shown in promoting students, and learning and scholarly inquiry are held in low esteem.

These faults are characteristic, but not universally so, of American education. If our more fruitful traditions were to shape institutions outside our country, however, somebody along the line had to exercise dis-
cridination. In the case of Puerto Rican education neither early American officials nor Puerto Ricans of more recent years have managed, or wanted, to do so. The result is educational anarchy. The island's youth are not placed in touch with the things and structures of their universe. Attitudinizing substitutes for inquiry and self-knowledge. As a recent visitor to the university put it, "My, there are a lot of unexamined lives being lived around this place."

If Puerto Rico was suffering from vague uncertainties in 1898, exposure to the nondirective influence and policies of the United States deepened and perpetuated the subject's instability. Puerto Rico's current prosperity, its overnight achievement of one of the highest living standards of Latin America, and its expanding opportunities for social mobility are largely attributable to mere spillage of resources from the richest nation in the world. Two energetic governors, Tugwell and Muñoz Marín, and a handful of talented planners lost no time in putting this spillage to use. But wonders worked in the industrial sector are not matched in such important fields as agriculture, education, and city planning, to say nothing of the welfare of the throngs of rural and urban poor. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the hard shell of top-level technocrats covers an underbody of soft institutions. The emergence of a labor group or a political minority having forceful leadership and a hard-headed program would cathet a good deal of dispersed anxiety and threaten the apparently stable order. If such movements have not gathered force, it is partly owing to the congenital difficulty of singling out real or putative opponents. Sinister classes or groups have been weakly identified: "The ultimate form of class consciousness—that which can identify one's own strata as the unit within which one's fate is determined and whose total movement is a necessary condition of individual movement—seems as yet barely present on the Puerto Rican scene. Nor can we safely predict the likelihood of its emergence sooner or later."

The bloody guerrilla warfare waged against Spain in Cuba in the last century had no counterpart in Puerto Rico. The twentieth century has seen surprisingly little overt antagonism toward the United States. Understandably, "colonial" resentment is widespread, but much of it finds surrogate expression in an undertow of innocuous, often unconscious acts of sabotage. Campaign oratory features the island's future political status. Two emphases are of special significance. One is that the three current options are parallel to the three that were in the air almost a century ago, during the last years of Spanish rule. Then they were autonomismo, asimilismo, and separatismo instead of commonwealth, statehood, and independence. Within this longer perspective contemporary formulae have a hollow ring. They seem designed for people "shopping" for status and show only a casual relationship to the island's institutional development. A second point is that political arguments rest importantly on
tortuous calculations of tax and trade benefits. No one denies that voluntary political change should obey, among other things, broad economic considerations, but it is surprising that a people that takes pride in its Hispanic “soul” should translate them into a dollar-and-cents reckoning carried to the last decimal point.

The case of Puerto Rico offers interesting analogies with the island territories of the three European powers in the Caribbean—England, France, and the Netherlands. Such analogies show that much that is attributed to a discontinuity between Hispanic and North American “values” in Puerto Rico in fact widely characterizes “colonial” situations. An outstanding difference, however, is that the European countries have established education systems that are by and large coherent and intellectually exigent—and virtual replicas of those in Europe. An Englishman who visits the University of the West Indies notices no great difference in standards and curriculum from what he is used to at home. In Puerto Rico,

standards in the secondary schools and in the university are low, as compared with those of the British dependencies; but the American system at these levels provides for more children.

Under the American system... advance is likely to be on a broader base, and the dangerous intellectual gap between the many and the few is likely to be less wide. The disadvantage in this case is that the education given is of necessity spread so thin, and is therefore so poor in quality, that much of it must be regarded as a total waste.13

In all the Caribbean islands thorny problems of adjusting education to the local setting plague the schools. Here I simply make the point that European school systems, however unresponsive they may be to pressing local need, are self-consistent and culturally assured. The island peoples may eventually modify or rebel against them, but at least they provide targets. From Aristotle’s *Ethics* to modern psychoanalysis I suppose it to have been an informed theory of human growth that the road to maturity lies in exposure to coherent models for action, not in being “shown how.”

From Americans it is hard to elicit a model for action, whether in the institutional, cultural, or intellectual realm; but it is easy to extract piece-meal methods. In their eagerness to make friends and to “show how,” Americans constantly try to jump the culture gap. In Puerto Rico, American research teams pry into the intimacies of Puerto Rican habits of work, banking, worship, and sex. Because of the deceptive “closeness” of Americans—and because for Americans all men are brothers under the skin (and yet the skin makes a difference)—it is difficult for Puerto Ricans to see Americans and their culture at a distance and to articulate forthright attitudes toward them. The anxieties produced by the colonial
situation crystallize in only random or episodic direct action.

One important feature of the American presence has so far been left out of the picture, namely, its hidden source of energy and purpose. If a style of life issuing from a sense of history gives focus to European cultures, we might say that salvational faith in the future galvanizes American culture. In no political rhetoric, perhaps, does the word crusade figure more prominently than in the American. Without attempting to define this faith, I simply confess bafflement at how one might imagine the immense technical and organizational achievements of the United States to be expressive of mere “materialism” or how one might suppose that the technics of Western civilization can be adopted as mere artifacts that effect no shifts in the spiritual order. Yet the following representative quotation shows such confusion to exist:

Puerto Rico . . . faces a serious historical challenge: to provide conditions of modern economic life and a respectable level of civilization for [its] millions of human beings. . . .

What will this mean for our spiritual culture? Basically it means that Puerto Rico must be willing to undergo the danger of a transformation which will place it technologically—within its possibilities, of course—at the level of the industrial world of the United States. . . . The industrial technics that allow the United States to live at high levels of consumption, comfort, and material efficiency are essentially transferable from one human group to another as part of a common cultural development of the West. . . .

The great question that arises when we make this oversimple statement of the case is: Will this assimilation of material aspects, science, and modern techniques by our culture mean the loss of our particular manner of being? I think not. 14

Three misunderstandings expressed or implied in this passage bedevil the thinking of many Puerto Rican intellectuals. They are (1) that technological progress is exclusively “American”; (2) that technological change can be effected without posing spiritual dilemmas; and (3) that Puerto Rico has, and the United States does not have, a “spiritual culture.”

The life history of a Puerto Rican sugarcane worker who fairly late in life experienced a conversion to revivalist Protestantism illustrates one form of bedrock spiritual reorientation in a technologically changing society. The author comments as follows:

It has been fashionable to assume that Westernization—crudely, the introduction of capitalistic technology and economy and of democratic ideology—leads directly to secularization among non-Western peoples. It cannot be stressed enough that this is not necessarily true. . . . Becoming a Protestant per se may not increase one’s chances for rapid Americanization; but such a move may in its ancillary effects do just that. It may be that when Western ideology and technique are imposed on a backward people, acculturation to an easy-going secular view will come fastest if they become more religious first. 15
The point here is not that Protestantism is a necessary concomitant of better plumbing, TV sets, and industrialization. The latter may well, however, provoke reorientation, even a regressive one, in the spiritual substrate. This may come in many ways, often informal and non-"religious." And the manifest content of the "conversion" may appear unrelated to the rationalized ethos of the new society.

A neglected feature of Puerto Rican life that bears on this question is the popularity of spiritism, which performs many important functions in the society. It supplies catharsis in a culture that fails to offer the wherewithal and the occasions for focused emotional outlet. It alleviates personality disorders caused by obsolescent or ineffectual social arrangements. It restores hierarchy to a fluid and weakly textured society. It permits role playing when personal identities are loosely established.

Although the forms of spiritism are many, a usual primary function is to help people deal with ill-defined, seemingly unmanageable obstacles in daily life. It is therapeutic for free-floating anxiety. The rigid hierarchy of a spiritist session, contrasting with the random order of society at large, is determined by the degree of control that each member exercises over the spiritual world: the medium, the participant who enjoys "faculties," the participant without "faculties." The institutionalized hallucinations of spiritism serve as lightning rods in a situation where potential villains and scapegoats (Americans, the upper class, the lower class, politicians, Negroes, philandering husbands) are not clearly and aggressively defined. In more intimate sessions, role playing by the medium and auxiliary allows the acting out of domestic problems arising from archaic family patterns (e.g., a wife confronts her husband's paramour, which she cannot do in the community).

What has been said leads us to hypothesize that the changes wrought in twentieth-century Puerto Rico have occurred largely in the material and economic sectors and, rather more externally, in the social and political ones. When one examines moral and psychological orders, however, one almost suspects stasis. In these realms the effect of the elusive culture, distracted administration, and material resources of the United States has been to exacerbate problems that were in the air long before 1898.

One should therefore beware of construing Puerto Rican society and culture as a hybrid crossing of pure Hispanic and North American strains, particularly as this may imply sudden mutation or, in the term so frequently applied to the island, "transformation." If societies can indeed achieve self-transcendence, then it matters little what we throw into the hopper in describing social change. A handful of Spanish and Yankee culture traits would be enough. The sociologist and social engineer win the field, and the historian becomes the faithful journalist reporting events on the day that Lincoln died or in the year that Puerto Rico: eternal crossroads 209
Rico's genes jumped. If, however, there is a trajectory to the growth of societies, then the historical logic of institutions and attitudes assumes importance. And we are led to the familiar homily that societies, like persons, may be victimized by their past or may make capital of it but cannot escape it.

In this case we deal with a subject who suffers from a weak ego structure. Charismatic figures attract him. He relates ambivalently to authority (the United States) and distantly to peers (Latin America). His lack of mature relationships with others engenders preoccupation with status and proliferation of fantasies. For Yankees he is an expressive Andalusian, for Latin Americans a dynamic businessman. These fantasies blossom when watered by praise and wilt under criticism. In real life a mediatorial role proves more congenial than a self-assertive one. The subject's docility masks resentment and generalized anxiety, and it sometimes gives way to goal-inhibited violence. His life tempo oscillates between apathy and excessive busyness. Freudian analysis would emphasize the childhood origins of the disorder and deemphasize the change of father substitutes occurring late in the subject's career.

**The Higher Learning (1958)**

What impresses the visitor to the University of Puerto Rico is the large degree to which it reflects the spirit and organization of American universities. Understandably, many Puerto Ricans deplore this influence from the north. Others endorse American methods so thoroughly as to appear insensitive to domestic need or else pessimistic about prospects for domestic innovation. Arguments between extremists from these two groups, however, tend to serve as a façade for animosities unrelated to the substance of the case. A glance at the history of universities since the Middle Ages should suffice to prove to “localists” that the great universities of the West were, for generations after their founding, patterned after institutions from alien cultures:

> The students of the University of Bologna influenced the masters of the University of Paris. Paris, in turn, sent back her English students to their native island, and thus helped in founding Oxford. Germany was two hundred years behind the rest of Europe in the establishment of her universities. . . . The whole history of medieval culture and civilization is marked by the influence of the universities of one people over the universities of another.17

> For “universalists” the lesson of history is that a new university eventually “digests” the foreign influence and begins to give tongue to its own civilization. A pertinent example is the American university itself. Only in our century has this institution, with all its strengths and defects, come into its own, achieving distinctive traits, producing its own intellec-

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tual programs, acquiring international leadership. In colonial times college administration and curricula in America took after the English model. Then for a few decades after independence French influences were in the ascendant. Yet the estheticism, subtleties, and elegance of French intellectual life were out of keeping with needs of a frontier democracy, and Americans were wary of “atheistic” tendencies in French thought, to say nothing of the “immorality” of student life in Paris. England, however, failed to resume leadership, in part because its universities provided indifferently for graduate study in the liberal arts and were ill adapted for teacher training, a primary requirement for the United States.

At this point the German university became a shaping force. Till then Germany had been little known to Americans; its literature had not yet won its spurs; and Americans found the German language as unmanageable for discourse and instruction as Latin Americans initially find English to be. Yet the German university city offered an atmosphere where students were immersed throughout their waking hours in studies and the play of ideas. Further, German habits of conscientious research attracted practical Americans who were resentful of English aloofness and impatient with Gallic subtleties. During the century before World War I some ten thousand Americans received academic training in Germany.

The appeal of German training to Americans is analogous to the contemporary appeal of American training to Puerto Ricans, who appear bent on redeeming their society by mastering the techniques of economic planning, social engineering, and applied science. To the degree it holds, the comparison points two lessons. First, American universities in the long run assimilated and modified the German system. The German library, stocked for intensive research, set new norms for American university libraries, while the German research seminar was adapted to a more informal, intellectually less mature atmosphere. The German lecture system was not so easily transplanted, for its success depended on diligent, sophisticated students, classes of moderate size, and confident professors whose lectures reflected original scholarship. The American university rarely united these conditions for the effective lecture course, and the mode of instruction that came to be more fruitful and characteristic was the discussion class. The relative success of the “general education” movement, another American product, largely depends on this method.

The first lesson suggested, then, is that a university striving for identity must assimilate the foreign model. Although adaptations are often dictated by “deficiencies” in the host culture, accommodation to deficiency may well induce fruitful pedagogical discovery. Let us assume, for instance, that lack of intellectual sophistication in the United States prejudices the lecture system and necessitates class discussions. It then turns out that discussion at its best affords more vital acquaintance with
literature and ideas than was possible using more formal methods. Similarly, it is a complaint in Puerto Rico that children grow up in homes where few books exist, where the habit of reading is scarcely found, and where little “general culture” is acquired. This at first glance seems to be a deficiency that limits the university’s hopes for achievement. Yet this very “deficiency” might inspire the search for an affective, unconventional encounter between student and subject matter that the book-centered curriculum fails to develop. By such methods I do not mean routine use of audiovisual aids or closed-circuit television. I have in mind an imaginative awakening of teachers to the possibilities of their subject matter and their recognition that twenty-year-olds, though intellectually innocent, have mature interests and emotions. If they see good reason for it, such students are ready for books to enter their lives.

A second lesson from the comparison is that the German influence came to fruit in the United States only after a long lapse, if we speak of its effects in shaping institutions rather than its impact on individual teachers and students. The decisive event was the opening of the Johns Hopkins University in 1876, more than half a century after Americans first studied in Germany. Although one should not force historical comparisons, it is of interest that slightly over half a century has passed since the founding of an American-type university in Puerto Rico—and that the definitive cast of the institution is hotly debated on all sides. The American university scene of the last century differs importantly, of course, from the contemporary Puerto Rican one. First of all, German influence in the United States was absorbed by institutions founded within traditions of the culture itself that could make selective modifications responsive to local need and to continuing foreign influence. The American-style University of Puerto Rico was an alien graft in a country that had never before had a university. Second, Puerto Rico is a small country with few university centers and weakly developed relations with seats of learning elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus it is denied the stimulating competition and exchange that were so important to American universities (sometimes at the expense, it must be said, of the integrity of the campus “community”). Vigorous intellectual traffic with those American nations that share its heritage and dilemmas would mitigate the paralyzing effects of Puerto Rico’s alleged cultural ambivalence (what modern culture is unitary?), its stepchild complex, and its legendary insularismo.

The University of Puerto Rico must thrive on centers of vital interest that will awaken local response and attract the best talent from abroad. As Ortega wrote, “Instead of teaching what a utopian desire says should be taught one must teach only what can be taught, that is, what can be learned.” This is not a narrowly nationalist argument, for it is evident that a seminar on Aristotle’s Politics might be conducted so as to touch
the lives of Puerto Rican students more closely than does the customary survey of Puerto Rican history. The point is simply that the university do what it can do best, that it make firm beginnings in areas of regional vitality. Such beginnings, rooted in the particular, ramify toward the universal as the universal is found functionally necessary to elucidate the particular. Provincialism (as distinct from regionalism) manifests itself not only in hermetic concern with local affairs but also in passive adoption of foreign systems as a means of saving face. American visitors to the university should find cause for embarrassment in the extent to which routine features of the American system—the pretension to omniscience reflected in “coverage,” however perfunctory, of a standard academic menu; the prominence given to utilitarian areas such as home economics and business administration; the mystical conversion of educational achievement to arithmetic indices—have been uncritically implanted.

No foreign professor can complain of the cordiality that awaits him in informal association with Puerto Ricans. But he may be disconcerted when in performing his duties he attempts to participate in the university community. For he may find either an attitude of polite interestlessness, outwardly uncritical and at times reverential, or else one of polite imperviousness, which stands for the feeling that a Chinaman can hardly be expected to sense the delicate and unique problems of Puerto Rico. In either case there is no give-and-take, the only process by which persons, institutions, and peoples find identity and grow. The presumption that Puerto Rico is a cultural crossroads is ironic insofar as the term denotes a mere locus, a mise en scène, where Spaniards and Americans meet and exchange ideas with Argentines and Chileans.

Ortega insisted that a university intimately reflects its cultural setting. Like other national institutions, a school system is outstanding because its nation is outstanding, not vice versa. Thus a school “depends much more on the public climate (aire público) that enfolds it than on the pedagogical climate artificially created within its walls.” We need not carry the thesis so far, however, as to say that every institution is prisoner of a monolithic culture that moves in obedience to undeflectable forces of history. Vital cultures have centers of vision and leadership, points of ferment, catalysis, and impending “breakthrough.” Despite my critical reflections, I feel the university to be potentially such a center. It currently supports free, heterogeneous speculation and expression, by Puerto Ricans and foreigners from many lands, to a degree perhaps unparalleled in Latin American countries of comparable or appreciably larger size. I am far from agreement with those who would have the university permeated by the aire público and journalistic nationalism of bureaucratic and commercial San Juan. I would see it encourage boldly and on many fronts the task of creative mediation between universals of experience and stubborn particulars of time and place.
The students themselves provide the teacher’s clearest clues to these particulars and to the realm of discourse by which universals are to be mediated. Who they are in this case is suggested by Kathleen Wolf’s study of the upbringing of children in three island subcultures. Her middle-class community is of special interest as a hypothetical background for many a university student. Wolf concludes that “maintenance of dependence is the single most important characteristic setting off the middle-class child” from children of rural workers. The ideal of the middle-class mother is to acquit herself efficiently in the domestic sphere. Because she derives social approval and narcissistic pleasure from a clean and well-dressed child, he must be frequently washed and changed by the nursemaid. The maid discourages independent action, fondles the child when he is angry, and keeps him entertained. Hence an association builds up among cleanliness, good clothes, social approval, maternal acceptance, and control over impulses. Soiling and careless appearance become linked with social criticism, maternal rejection, indulgence of impulses, and a relationship with a low-status female figure. “This dichotomy may express itself in varying ways when the child reaches adulthood.” Thus, for example, carefree appearances are prized, for conspicuous hard work is virtually a breach of manners.

The father has little involvement with child rearing and is idealized as an authoritarian figure demanding obedience and dispensing justice. Naturally, husbands have trouble living up to this image; in moments of domestic crisis they revert to the role of rebellious children, while their wives assume that of irritated yet indulgent mothers. Such ambivalences make conceit, or lack of amiability, an offensive quality, for when people are uncertain of their roles, outward role symbols must be scrupulously maintained.

My purpose in summarizing Wolf’s findings is not to justify a clinical approach toward students or to attribute their character traits to early swaddling habits. Even if her conclusions applied to other communities, they would not “explain” Puerto Rican culture. As we said of the university so can we say of the family: that it receives from the general cultural ethos.

Without insisting on easy connections, I suggest an analogy between the hypothetical personality formed in the home and student behavior observable in the university classroom. Wolf’s study stresses that concern with appearances leads, in child as in mother, to narcissism or self-involvement that dampens ambition and deflects serious introspection. Thirst for approval is reinforced by the father’s role, authoritarian in form but ambivalent in content. The child is alert to casual cues for behavior, since the father offers no consistent model. The tendency to obey external cues rather than an inner voice is strengthened as the youth multiplies his contacts with a middle-class society that belittles sus-
tained or creative endeavor and places a premium on amiability and ostensible leisure.

On the basis of my own teaching experience I once impressionistically listed five traits of the Puerto Rican university student. While all the traits are conducive to classroom congeniality, they are also valuable ingredients for the modal character just sketched: amiability (which preserves amenities), open-mindedness (which obviates commitment), deference (which wins approval and masks hostility), animal spirits (which fall short of passion), and affectivity (which gives sensitivity to cues). The teacher must recognize that such traits, however appealing, are rooted in character and may even serve the needs of deep-seated narcissism. If such be the case, the job of breaking the circle to free the faculties for self-development will be arduous.

Teachers at the university frequently complain that students lack independence and initiative, that for them education means finding out what the teacher wants them to know and retailing it back. This encourages a deference relationship similar to that described for child and parent. When the teacher is not immersed in intellectual pursuits or when he is preoccupied with his reputation in the eyes of colleagues and superiors, his resemblance to the hypothetical middle-class father increases. He stands for authority but provides no model. Students must manage with random and incoherent cues.

What one misses among the students and some who teach them is intellectual curiosity, acceptance of risk, and pursuit of learning as adventure. This circumstance seems related to a general characteristic of Puerto Rican life, namely, that the history and culture of the island itself are not recognized as a challenge. They go largely unexamined; they are not made present and celebrated (taking celebration to mean living communion, not homage or self-congratulation). The subtlety and fascination of Puerto Rican life, as well as the intricate structures of colonialism, elude the intellectual grasp of Hispanophiles and Yankee-philes, culture commissars and shock troops of American social scientists. The real Operation Bootstrap should be not economic but cultural. Little knowing or celebrating their past, Puerto Ricans are ever alert to word of it from others. They appreciate commiseration for their bicultural schizophrenia. They are hypersensitive to criticism, above all the political in-groups.

One's advice, then, to the young man or woman growing up in Puerto Rico is, "Get lost!" Get lost so that you may find yourself. Forget what others think, forget what should be done, forget conventions and genteel expectations. In Pedreira's classic exhortation: "Let's go fishing even if the Dutchman catches us!" What Puerto Rico has most to fear is not its problems but that its problems may some day be solved—that the lower classes will obediently become sterilized, that industries and the
middle class will proliferate, that the friendly and passionless world promised by the Division of Community Education will come to be.

Power for achievement is acquired only after risking, even losing, the self. Achievement demands that this power be fashioned and controlled by *style*. Alfred North Whitehead described style as the most austere mental quality, the last acquirement and ultimate morality of the educated mind. Style in arts, in science, in daily tasks, has the esthetic qualities of attainment and restraint. “The love of a subject in itself and for itself, where it is not the sleepy pleasure of pacing a mental quarter-deck, is the love of style as manifested in that study.”

As one end to be pursued above all others by Puerto Ricans I would name, not industrialization, not sharper definition of political status, not reconciliation of cultural ambivalence, but attainment of style in Whitehead’s sense. Puerto Rico prototypically exemplifies the lack of style common to national cultures of all the Americas. Acquaintance with the education system of the island, with its city planning, with its intellectual and above all its political life, by and large confirms the assertion. Two centuries ago Abbad y Lasierra provided an apt cultural symbol in describing Puerto Rico’s rural dwellings. These houses, he wrote, were built on posts without use of lime, stone, or iron, “by their very weakness guaranteeing the greatest strength during earthquakes or hurricanes. . . . The whole construction, reinforced with flexible canes, leans easily toward wherever the turbulence moves it; thus it suffers not the slightest damage since it offers no resistance.” This highly functional rural architecture is adduced, not to prove lack of style in the esthetic sense (for which one would turn to the dreary low-cost cement cubicles of our own day), but to symbolize the attitude of those who surrender to power instead of shaping it.

**Embarrassing Colony (1984)**

There is some irony to the subtitle of Raymond Carr’s book, “a colonial experiment.” Not long ago many Puerto Ricans believed that the island’s commonwealth status represented a “compact” acknowledging Puerto Rico’s cultural identity and its right to self-determination. Today, in the Decolonization Committee of the United Nations, the United States still regularly resists being held accountable as Puerto Rico’s “colonial” mentor. But in this instance the exercise of American world power requires more than the usual disclaimer; and the word *experiment* implies conditions of scrutiny and control that scarcely apply to the case of Puerto Rico, which Carr chronicles as a history of mutual misperception, selective inattention, and abdicated responsibility.

For at least a century Puerto Rican politics have turned on the issue of political status. In the closing years of Spanish rule the choices facing
the islanders were those of continuing to accept annexation, working for autonomy, or demanding independence. Any change would have required concerted pressure by the island’s leaders on the regime in Madrid. In 1897, in a futile effort to stave off what was about to become the Spanish-American War, Spain granted Puerto Rico a charter of autonomy whose provisions, it is often alleged, were more generous than even the terms of the present commonwealth “compact.” In any case the new legislative assembly dissolved when, a week after it was convened, American troops landed.

After the occupation the shell game went on. Since 1952 the possible choices have been statehood, commonwealth status, and independence, but now each requires broad electoral endorsement, which the Puerto Ricans are reluctant to give. Although for a while it seemed that the prize lay under the commonwealth shell, economic pressures and political frustrations of the past decade have reopened the game, so that Carr likens the commonwealth to a palimpsest: “The message inscribed in 1952 is fading, to reveal beneath it an older inscription: Statehood or independence.”

Raymond Carr, the warden of St. Antony’s College, Oxford, and an accomplished historian of Spain with a broad knowledge of Latin America, was picked by the Twentieth Century Fund, after a long search, to conduct its study of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican and American scholars were found to have excessive parti pris. A scholar of “dispassion and sensitivity,” or, in the sporting tradition, a referee, was needed. Carr has done the job with more dispassion but less cultural sensitivity than Gordon K. Lewis, another Oxonian and a professor at the University of Puerto Rico, whose book on Puerto Rico has for two decades been acknowledged as the best account in English of the island’s politics, society, and culture. It was this book that kindled Carr’s first interest in Puerto Rico, and he now confirms many of Lewis’s gloomier predictions.

Carr, however, was asked to concentrate on the relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, and thus he tends to emphasize what some young Puerto Rican historians call the “leadership vision” (visión del procerato), which includes the various attitudes Puerto Rican politicians have taken toward the United States. Lewis wrote from socialist convictions and with sympathy toward the “delectable mountains” of the island’s culture and the emotional tone of its social life. He would not have referred, as Carr does, to Puerto Rican “cultural identity, however confused, provincial, and ambiguous it may be.” Yet both condemn the preoccupation of Puerto Ricans with their political status. For Lewis, only full independence “perhaps can forever end the Puerto Rican magnificent obsession with status.” Carr, without advocating any particular solution, quotes former governor Luis Muñoz Marín, the architect of the commonwealth, to the effect that politics centering on the island’s status have always impeded the realization of civilized ideals. They still do, he concludes.
Puerto Rico came under American rule in 1898 as a by-product of the war with Spain. The Treaty of Paris ceded the island to the United States as compensation for expenses incurred during the hostilities. The irony here was that the United States did not acquire Cuba, an island that had long been coveted by American investors and expansionists, but instead acquired an island whose existence had been more or less ignored. The conquest of Puerto Rico met the demands of the new Manifest Destiny, however, and opened the way for large-scale sugar investments that transformed the island’s economy. If the politics of inadvertency shaped Puerto Rico’s destiny, the politics of divide-and-rule came to govern its administration. With island leaders permanently at odds over status and arrangements for colonial rule, Washington keeps the ball in the Puerto Rican court (and decisions on rules of the game in U.S. federal courts). Puerto Rico is not for Washington a political constituency.

On July 28, 1898, Puerto Rico’s new military governor, General Nelson Miles, proclaimed that his troops had arrived to bestow justice, humanity, and prosperity with “the immunities and blessings of the liberal institutions of our government.” Any hopes raised by his conciliatory declaration soon collapsed, and Puerto Ricans began to refer to their new rulers as the “czars and sultans.” In 1900 the Foraker Act made Puerto Rico an “unincorporated territory” subject to the will of Congress. The U.S. president appointed the governor; the Executive Council, which doubled as a legislative upper chamber; and the island’s Supreme Court. Denied U.S. citizenship, living in a land that lacked status as a nation, the Puerto Rican was a man without a country. A San Juan newspaper complained in 1901: “We are and we are not a foreign country. We are and we are not citizens of the United States... The Constitution... applies to us and does not apply to us.” Economic arrangements were less murky. Puerto Ricans paid no taxes, for they were not represented in Congress, but they could ship goods duty-free to the American market, which created a situation that immediately benefited American corporations.

Island politicians were soon proposing various alternatives to abject colonialism. José de Diego, who had been the minister of justice in the short-lived parliament created by the Spanish charter of autonomy, became a prophet of the modern independence movement. José Celso Barbosa, a black physician trained at the University of Michigan, supported statehood and U.S. citizenship as an assertion of collective dignity. Luis Muñoz Rivera split with Barbosa to favor a vague system of home rule resembling the British government’s grant of a parliament to Canada. His Unionist party dominated island politics from 1904 to 1932; his son Luis Muñoz Marín, also a master of the ambivalent discourse of colonial politics, many years later sought and got support for a more populist version of home rule, but far short of the Canadian formula of autonomy.

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The Jones Act of 1917 granted a passive form of citizenship to Puerto Ricans—they would have a special representative in Congress but no vote there—and it modestly enlarged the sphere of home rule without relinquishing the veto power of the U.S. president and his appointed governor. Offering too little too late, the Jones Act only sharpened colonial tensions. The years between 1917 and 1941, Carr feels, were "largely wasted," a view implying that history is the work of heroic leaders, not subterranean forces. By 1930 the island was no longer simply a nuisance but a Caribbean poorhouse, suffering from the worldwide Depression and the ruin left by a devastating hurricane in 1929.

The New Deal conceived for the mainland in the 1930s produced no basic reforms for Puerto Rico. Here lay a classic dilemma, emphasized by Carr: a policy designed for industrial America "could not cure a feeble island economy confronting the problems of a banana republic [sic]." What was needed, he implies, was a new policy fashioned from above by men of good will and common sense who could reconcile the "difference of perception on both sides." For Carr, Puerto Ricans are a "nation of paranoiacs" who chafe under oppression yet harbor secret enthusiasm for the American way of life.

The spirit of the New Deal finally arrived in Puerto Rico during the governorship of Rexford Tugwell, a gregarious, humane technocrat appointed by Roosevelt in 1941. He found an ally in Muñoz Marín, president of the Puerto Rican senate, who had formed the Popular Democratic party (PPD) in 1938. Muñoz Marín soft-pedaled the status question while insisting on Puerto Rican identity and anticolonialism. He courted the common man instead of neglecting, harassing, or buying him. A "revolution from above" followed, one challenged on the right as a dangerous move into state socialism and by independentistas as a sellout.

In 1947 Puerto Rico was granted the right to elect its own governor—the post held by Muñoz Marín from 1949 to 1965—and that same year the Industrial Incentives Act, granting a ten-year exemption from local taxes to businesses that established themselves on the island, was passed. This inaugurated the economic program known as Operation Bootstrap, which was meant to encourage internal development but in effect created the rationale for the presence of American corporations that were shifting from agriculture to industry.

In 1952 Puerto Rico was established as a commonwealth under Public Law 660, following a referendum among the inhabitants of the island in 1950. "If we seek statehood," said Muñoz Marín, "we die waiting for Congress, and if we adopt independence we die from starvation—in any case we die." The "third way" was to accommodate demands for local democracy and "internal decolonization" to the inescapable power of Congress. The Spanish version of the spongy word commonwealth—Estado Libre Asociado, or "Free Associated State"—gave the impression of respecting all
three longstanding aspirations of the island's various leaders—sovereignty, partnership, and statehood. In 1953 the United Nations was informed that Puerto Rico was no longer a colony but a people associated by “compact” (to avoid the less equivocal term “contract,” for no contract had been made).

Yet deep doubts persisted even during the outwardly quiet years of the 1950s and 1960s. Many in Puerto Rico felt that the commonwealth should be “perfected” by more autonomy and an explicit bilateral compact. Then the question arose whether such an arrangement would be merely a stepping stone to one of the other two options—sovereign independence or statehood—both of them irrevocable. The Joint Commission on the Status of Puerto Rico, organized under Kennedy and Johnson in the mid-sixties, found all three ambitions to be honorable. Independence, however, would mean transitional economic guarantees during fifteen or more years, while statehood, the commission estimated, would “cost” the island nearly $200 million a year in federal taxes and require two preparatory decades of economic growth (a highly optimistic hope, it turns out). From the economic point of view the choices were dismal: either relapse through independence to the condition of the Dominican Republic, “catch up” to Mississippi, or remain in limbo as a commonwealth.

In a plebiscite in 1967 Puerto Ricans were asked to choose among the three options. This was a hypothetical exercise, since any scheme chosen could be carried out only by the U.S. Congress. The commonwealth option called not for continuing the status quo but for the maximum of self-government consistent with equal U.S. citizenship, a common defense and currency, and a common market. The independentistas rejected taking part in the plebiscite, and the commonwealth plan was chosen, but not by a majority of qualified voters. The following year the prostate-hood New Progressive party (PNP), profiting from a split in the PPD, won the governorship and control of the House. Despite the Republican party affiliations of its candidate, the wealthy industrialist Luis Ferré, the PNP appealed to poor people who had migrated to the city as well as to young suburban executives. This was a new urban constituency that had been discounted in the traditional PPD strategy of Muñoz Marín.

The PPD returned to power in 1972, lost in 1976, and won control of the legislature in the disputed, hairline election of 1980. No politician of Muñoz Marín's stature had emerged, and the economic basis of the PPD's power was dissolving. For all the apparent success of industrialization by invitation under Operation Bootstrap, an increase of 309 percent in GNP between 1950 and 1977 was accompanied by a meager 24 percent rise in employment. Emigration to the mainland was relied on to act as a safety valve for surplus labor as industries became capital-intensive; but economic recession and the oil crisis were closing this valve by the early
1970s, while lower factory wages in the Far East and elsewhere siphoned off industrial investment. (Nearby Haiti has since been competing with Asia. The average daily wage there is $2.65, while the Puerto Rican hourly factory wage is $4.50.)

Puerto Rico had become the beggar government that congressmen in Washington had warned against eighty years before. Federal transfer payments, made necessary by the endemic unemployment and poverty, rose from 9 percent of the island's gross domestic product in 1950 to 29 percent in 1980. In prosperous times the PPD had preached the compatibility of institutionalized democracy, economic advance, cultural identity, and dignified partnership. As Operation Bootstrap faltered, and the contrast between the hopelessly poor and the newly rich became more acute, the PPD's assurances camouflaged the bothersome ambiguities of the commonwealth less and less effectively.

This, roughly, is the history Carr sets forth. Although his book provides only a slim basis for proposing solutions, he treats us to the canny sort of exercise in irony and tenacious explication that we might expect of a connoisseur of Spanish politics and a devotee of fox hunting. Carr recognizes that the issue of political status has become anachronistic as a vehicle for pressing the interest of the common people, a case of "historical pseudomorphosis," to use Spengler's term. He notes an increase in numbers of unattached voters, who respond less to a party's position on the island's status than to its economic platform. Perhaps a third of the PNP supporters, for example, are indifferent to its demand for statehood. And if it is true that when you scratch a Puerto Rican you find an independentista, then why does only 5-6 percent of the electorate support either the "liberal bourgeois" Puerto Rican Independence party or the "radical petty bourgeois" Puerto Rican Socialist party, which professes admiration for the Cuban model?

Carr's own suggestions mirror the uncertainties he describes. On one hand he holds that the main issue is not relations with the United States but the state of the island economy itself. "Rather than engaging in floating 'alternatives,' it might be well to work with what is available to solve what remains Puerto Rico's biggest problem: poverty." On the other hand he criticizes American resistance to "a fundamental decision" about status. "Colonialism by consent" may be offensive to some, but if nine out of ten Puerto Ricans wish to remain part of the United States, Congress must recognize that the island's economy cannot survive unaided (however "ineptly" $50 billion worth of transfer payments and investment have been squandered since the 1940s). And Congress must allow Puerto Rico to preserve its cultural identity, however "provincial" that identity may be. The point is made more starkly by Juan García Pasalaquacqua, a member of the Puerto Rican "mafia" of young intellectuals who tried to devise "alternative futures" during the Carter administra-
tion. For him it is simply time for the United States to decolonize: “Make us equal or let us go.”

 Construing the matter as a question of the poverty problem versus the status problem leads one to accept the prescriptions and the presumed wisdom of political and academic experts who thrive on simplistic diagnosis. It also allows Carr some nimble comparisons with Ireland and Quebec. But if nearly a century of reluctant partnership has proven anything, it is that Puerto Rico, with a population equal to or larger than half a dozen or so independent Spanish American countries, is also a “nation” in Rousseau’s sense and perhaps cannot be easily compared with scores of other “colonial experiments.”

 Indeed, if we consider all of Latin America to be a vast region that has doggedly preserved its identity and persevered in an intermittent struggle for internal and external liberation for five centuries, we may well ask whether Puerto Rico is as special a case as the local debate over political status suggests. Is the use of Puerto Rico’s outlying island of Vieques for U.S. Navy target practice more “colonial” than the use of the whole nation of Honduras as a platform for counterrevolution? And is the economic situation in Mexico or Brazil, held in a financial straitjacket by interest rates of American banks, any more distorted than that of Puerto Rico, whose people enjoy the automatic compensation of transfer payments? Or finally, who are better placed to make themselves heard, the muzzled citizens of Haiti and Paraguay or the Puerto Ricans, with their tribunal inside the United States itself?

 A more generous treatment than Carr’s of Puerto Rican intellectual trends of the past half-century might make similarities with the general Latin American case clearer. Let us start with Carr’s brief appraisal of the famous diagnosis of Puerto Rican “national character” in Antonio S. Pedreira’s essay Insularismo, written in 1934. Carr takes this as a study of collective “docility,” a view of a society that was derailed in its quest for identity by the abrupt transition from the humanist “culture” of Spain to the materialist “civilization” of America. This argument seems to explain Puerto Rican “schizophrenia,” the more so in that it highlights “bourgeois” manifestations of the two legacies rather than their respective traditions of popular protest and rebellion. But intellectuals elsewhere in Latin America in the thirties were offering similar analyses of national character, although they were usually couched in less Manichean terms because in the independent countries most writers had long since dismissed Iberian traditions, taken en bloc, as unserviceable for Latin America. The point is that Pedreira, like his contemporaries elsewhere, had tasted Western disenchantment, and his dual categories culture and civilization, derived, like theirs, from Spengler and Ortega y Gasset, point beyond specifics of time and place—in Puerto Rico the quarrels of Hispanophile and Americanized elites—to the menace of rationalist Western schemes of salvation.

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For a generation or more, intellectual debate in Puerto Rico was cast in the dichotomous mold shaped by Pedreira. Yet by the 1960s a new dialectic was at work, as recognized in 1970 by the founding of the Center for Studies of the Puerto Rican Reality (CEREP). Carr mentions it with guarded respect in a footnote or two as composed of radical, anti-imperialist young revisionists attracted to Marxism-Leninism. Ideology apart, however, the contribution of the group has been its efforts to translate politicocultural slogans into a calculus of social forces and economic interests. For this work Anglo-American empiricism is no less handy than the constructs of Marxism, and it is no accident that CEREP receives support from the Ford Foundation. CEREP, in fact, has adopted a perspective similar to that of dozens of other Latin American research centers as it tries to place the Puerto Rican case in a hemispheric setting and to explain what Carr dismissively calls the “wasted years” between 1917 and 1941 or the present time of “muddle and frustration.”

Pedreira’s attempt to recover tradition and CEREP’s attempt to expose it have led to a more historically informed emphasis on “praxis,” of which Samuel Silva Gotay’s *Christian Revolutionary Thought in Latin America and the Caribbean* is symptomatic.³³ Carr describes Silva Gotay as supplementing “European Marxist-Christian dialogue [with] dependency theory, which adds the colonial struggle of the exploited periphery to the class struggle.” But one can hardly dismiss Silva Gotay’s book as a reprise of formulae from the 1960s. In it he discusses the Protestant Reformation as a period in which a crisis in material conditions coincided with a theoretical crisis in relation between church (or public hierarchy) and society. He treats subsequent history in this light and, through arguments based on liberation theology, sees Puerto Rico’s future as tied to that of Latin America generally. The future, he feels, is once again open-ended and depends not on management from above but on popular initiatives.

If, as Silva Gotay and CEREP suggest, the Puerto Rican people must finally define themselves, a word must be said about popular culture. Carr sees it as pathological. He speaks of Puerto Rico as “a culture hybrid,” its inhabitants victimized by the pervasive schizophrenia mentioned earlier. Their language itself, a “stereotyped, colorless speech,” betrays them. Such Spanish, “adulterated” by Americanisms, becomes the “mumbo jumbo” of the characters in Luis Rafael Sánchez’s *La guaracha del macho Camacho* (1976), a book that Carr calls “indispensable” for those who want to savor the “vulgarity and pretensions” of everyday life in San Juan.³⁴ But such a reductive reading of the novel proves only that Carr is more at home with the previous generation of writers, such as René Marqués and Pedro Juan Soto, who created, Sánchez has said, a “literature of guilt” that fulfills a civic duty rather than illuminates specific lives.³⁵ *La guaracha del macho Camacho* has no villainous gringos
or noble Puerto Rican nationalists. The text itself might seem to demonstrate how the process of colonization denies the poor the possibility of expressing their own complex feelings. However, what Carr takes to be incorrect, mumbo-jumbo Spanish is a popular language that Sánchez prizes for its precision and for rhythmic echoes of the tribal beat of the guaracha. Reading his novel the reader becomes an accomplice in transforming a colonial reality (in this case linguistic) from below.36

José Luis González examines emergent popular nationalism in his already classic essay, “The Country of Four Storeys” (1980), mentioned only glancingly by Carr.37 Drawing selectively on the CEREP studies, he makes three signal contributions to the familiar Latin American “national character” essay. First, he moves beyond static national-character portraiture and a frozen dialectic of Manichean forces to present a structure of four levels in continuing historical engagement. The ground floor is the original “national culture”: “popular and mestiza, fundamentally Afro Antillean,” such as seeks expression in Brathwaite’s “nation language” (see above, chapter 1). Next, with the transition from subsistence to latifundary agriculture came a society superimposed by expatriates from newly independent Spanish America, joined by English, French, Dutch, Irish, and others. Corsicans, Majorcans, and Catalans subsequently built a “mezzanine” for this floor. The third storey came with the American occupation at a moment when the second was still “badly furnished.” Here begins the dialectic—with borrowings and crossovers—between two elite-inspired views of national culture that found fullest expression in the 1930s through the 1950s, both serving projects for “guided identity.” The fourth storey was constructed from the imperfect welding of late-blooming American capitalism to “opportunist Puerto Rican populism” in the 1940s. Here, González holds, the economic and political dead end of “Free Association” discloses the irreparable structural split that the colonial design had thus far camouflaged. The ground floor of national culture now begins to reassert itself.

Beyond this imagery for a comprehensive and processual view of history, González makes two further contributions. First, he subsumes the “status” question—irresolvable in its usual formulations—to that of “identity,” with the proviso that identity is no longer acceptable as a decision from above but only as a historical emanation from the people. Second, if this emergent identity has a strong Afro-Caribbean component, it is to be defined not exclusively in national terms but as a dimension of Caribbean culture. In the linguistic realm this would replace the angry confrontation of two metropolitan languages, Spanish and English, dating from 1898, with the natural companionship of two eminently Caribbean tongues, Antillean Spanish and West Indian English.

These final paragraphs supply Puerto Rican perspectives as an oblique commentary on Carr’s sagacious vade mecum to contemporary politics.
and public issues. Other reviewers have criticized more vigorously than have I Carr's metropolitan *parti pris*. But even if we endorse his selection by the Twentieth Century Fund as a dispassionate outsider, Carr, like any Englishman, is surely aware that a game with only referees and no players is not an agonistic event.