Jorge Duany, *Puerto Rico: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. v + 189 pp. (Paper £10.99)

The latest book by anthropologist Jorge Duany, published in Oxford University Press's "What Everyone Needs to Know" series, offers a panoramic view of Puerto Rico. Duany writes that the book "provides a compendium of the Island's rich history, culture, politics, and economy" (p. 5). And the OUP website promises that "The concise question-and-answer format [of the series] is ideal for college students, professionals, and inquiring minds alike." The book indeed caters to a wide audience with curiosity but limited knowledge about Puerto Rico. It could also be useful for members of the Puerto Rican diaspora searching for a better understanding of Puerto Rico. I would particularly recommend it to those planning to visit the archipelago, or perhaps El Barrio (NYC) or Orlando (FL), and seeking an informed travel experience. (Note: Puerto Rico is actually an archipelago.) The book may not be very helpful for seasoned scholars of Puerto Rico since it is indeed introductory. In addition, there are no bibliographic references in the text and the suggested reading list offered at the end is limited. Furthermore, the question-and-answer format takes away from the nuance of the extended and cohesive narrative that gradually develops ideas. Yet, at the same time, the format allows for the personalized reading experience of skipping and returning to different sections. It also allows for clear and succinct answers to specified questions. The format and overall structure of the book are particularly suited for the "What Everyone Needs to Know" series that builds on the trust readers have of the author's expertise to introduce them to what may be called Puerto Rico.

And what is the Puerto Rico presented in this book? As could be expected from one of the foremost scholars of Caribbean migrations, Puerto Rico is portrayed as a diasporic community. It is also a vibrant but colonized nation, and an archipelago (often conceptualized as an island). Duany writes that at the onset of the twenty-first century Puerto Rico is a stateless nation not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture. On the contrary, it "remains a Spanish-speaking, Afro-Hispanic-Caribbean nation" (p. 2). While Duany acknowledges the increased use of English in the diaspora and the centrality of migration to the plurality that constitutes Puerto Rico, he identifies a shared language, territory, and history as defining qualities of the Puerto Rican nation. He also points out the general will of Puerto Ricans to imagine themselves as a nation. Puerto Rico is a nation, Duany argues, even if most of its members do not desire an independent nation-state. Such assertions must be understood in light of ongoing debates about whether the Puerto Rican nation exists and, if so, what its

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manifestations are. These are ultimately conversations about sovereignty, colonialism, and political status. Duany is consequently making an argument about the existence of “Puerto Rico—A Stateless Nation,” which is the title of his introductory chapter. His thoughts are particularly clear in the section devoted to answering the question “In what sense is Puerto Rico a nation?” (pp. 75–76). Yet, defining a nation, while adhering to the political imaginaries forged and recognized by the liberal world order, may not be the best strategy for decolonization. Attempts to define a nation are, after all, built on exclusions and can end up strengthening the disciplinary violence surrounding national boundaries in their multiple iterations. Elucidating for a wide audience the complex workings of colonialism can be a better strategy for decolonization because it problematizes the assumption that (de)colonization can be reduced to a political status. The successful debunking of such a popular notion can go a long way toward imagining a different future for Puerto Ricans.

In the book, Duany delves into the complicated colonial experience of Puerto Ricans and their transformation into a diasporic nation. But he offers much more as well. The outline of the chapters and questions tackled (pp. v–xi) reveals the breadth of the topics covered and portrays both the thematic and broadly chronological organization of the text. Chapter 1 covers Spanish colonial times and Chapters 2–4 delve into the U.S. years. The last two chapters then concentrate on the Puerto Rican diaspora in the United States. Chapter 3 is particularly useful for anyone interested in understanding the current fiscal crisis. It builds up to a discussion of the recent economic recession and public debt crisis, and of the U.S. Congress’s passage of PROMESA (The Puerto Rico Oversight, Management, and Economic Stability Act). The chapter also offers a glimpse into the creation and workings of the commonwealth status that since 1952 has defined (in flexible colonial terms) the relationship of Puerto Rico to the United States.

Marie Cruz Soto

Gallatin School of Individualized Study, New York University

m.cruz@nyu.edu