Carmelo Esterrich, *Concrete and Countryside: The Urban and the Rural in 1950s Puerto Rican Culture*. Pittsburgh PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018. xiv + 207 pp. (Paper US\$ 27.95)

Historians, sociologists, and anthropologists have intensively studied the mid-twentieth-century transformation of Puerto Rico from a rural into an urban society. Using music, literature, film, and graphic art, Carmelo Esterrich's *Concrete and Countryside* is one of the few studies dealing with the cultural aspects of this transformation. It describes the turbulent years of Operation Bootstrap, when the government sought to modernize Puerto Rico through community education and culture, elucidating ideas in popular culture and literature that shaped the processes of migration and urbanization. Using the Deleuze-Guattari concept of assemblages, Esterrich explains the contradictions, resistances, and impositions in the field of cultural production during the 1950s and 1960s.

The introduction and Chapter 1 explore some of the spaces in government institutions and popular music where the battle for cultural production occurred, including the imaginaries of Puerto Rican culture created by the Popular Democratic Party. Cultural practices and products of this period reflect a time of radical change. As the colonial territory was experiencing rapid urbanization, industrialization, and a new wave of Americanization, the government's Institute of Puerto Rican Culture promoted the primacy of traditional Hispanic heritage, while the Division of Community Education (DIVEDCO) sought to instill modern values in Puerto Ricans by producing short films, such as *Las manos del hombre*, which fostered the idea that development resulted from the productivity of ordinary citizens. DIVEDCO brought "modern culture" to the countryside at a time when most of the population was rural, but it also worked in urban communities. Meanwhile, Cortijo y su Combo, an Afro-Puerto Rican music group, played songs criticizing modernization, using *plena* and *bomba*, with Cuban *guaracha* and *son* and Brazilian *samba*, to generate an urban imaginary of transformations situated outside the dominant rural, Hispanic definitions of Puerto Rican culture. Their influence extended also to the rural hinterland where peasants had already been playing *plena* and *bomba*, even though urban, white, and middle-class Puerto Ricans often assume that African music remained isolated on the urban coast with the descendants of former slaves.

Chapters 2 and 3, and the epilogue examine Puerto Rican literature, in particular María Teresa Babín's *Fantasia boricua* (1952) and *Panorama de la cultura puertorriqueña* (1958), which portrays the rural landscape as devoid of history, while celebrating it as the depository of Puerto Rican national cul-

ture: a synthesis of Spanish, Taino, and African heritages. Esterrich contrasts two different views of Puerto Rico elaborated in René Marqués's *La carreta* (1952) and José Luis González's "Paísa (un relato sobre la emigración)" (1950). Marqués offers a critique of migration and city life centered in his anticolonial ideas but anchored in his conservative understanding of the countryside as a place of authenticity. Privileging the distresses of rural life, González's "Paísa" critiques the conflicts and contradictions resulting from modernization, in particular migration, labor, and industrialization, while affirming the lives of Puerto Rican migrants as the product of historical forces that produce inequality. Understandably, when the rural was being proposed as the authentic character of Puerto Rican national culture, counternarratives of the urban and modern were emerging to portray the chaos and multilayered nature of change. Oscar Lewis's *La Vida* documented the disruptive outsiders who didn't fit official images of a modern Puerto Rico. As a response, Nina N. Kaiden's *Puerto Rico: La nueva vida* (1966) attacked negative images of Puerto Rico by compiling canonical literature illustrated with the work of famous Puerto Rican painters.

Esterrich concludes that Puerto Rican culture cannot be explained as a simple dichotomy between the city and the countryside but is best understood as "an assemblage of assemblages," a concept that evokes the multiplicity of discourses and practices that dissipate the boundaries between the rural and the urban. He also uses Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams to understand these assemblages but fails to theorize his synthesis of Marxist and Deleuze-Guattari ideas.

Concrete and Countryside is an exceptional narrative of how socioeconomic transformations in the big island of Puerto Rico shaped cultural production. It invites us to examine Puerto Rican history through a cultural lens, while hinting at the relevance of class and race. Esterrich's approach to the city/countryside dichotomy is refreshing because postmodern analyses have often considered the rural and the urban as two opposed poles from which hybrids emerge. Though he ignores the literature on urbanism that explores how, with the emergence of the State, the urban gained primacy over the rural, Esterrich demonstrates that discourse analysis with class analysis grounded in political economy is still relevant to understanding Puerto Rico.

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