

emphasis and credence we should place on coeval descriptions and analyses in making our own assessments (pp. 26–28). At times, Park relies too heavily on interpretations given by nineteenth-century politicians and journalists.

Unquestionably, the author ended up liking Núñez. However, liking a person dictates impartiality, or at least unassailable arguments, which are not always present. For instance, Park attempts to quash the rumors of Núñez's self-interest in his marriage with Dolores Gallegos (pp. 77–78). But, at the age of 26, how substantial were Núñez's political assets? By Colombian standards, he had no oligarchical standing, which he acquired precisely through his marriage and his active support of José de Obaldía. Additionally, the author takes Charles W. Bergquist to task for his economic interpretation of the rise and fall of the Liberals. Yet Park also emphasizes (p. 196) economic conditions as a factor in the promotion of the political changes Núñez advocated.

Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of Park's study is that he failed to assess Núñez's actions, leaving us again with partisan interpretations. For example, the complex nature of Núñez's personality is never explored, and Park merely mentions his "uncertainty and skepticism" (p. 80), while giving two stanzas of the famous "Que sais-je?" Throughout the study, the author bypassed opportunities to analyze Núñez's actions and to explore the reasons for and significance of his political activities. Núñez is portrayed as a paladin of the Conservative restoration and the parties' reconciliation (pp. 214–215), but the constitutional dictatorship imposed by the Regeneration (p. 270) is left without analysis.

Núñez deserved more and better. After all, what he did in Colombian politics was unique, and to this date no one has dared to defy the country's political culture as the *costeño* did.

Northeastern Illinois University

J. IGNACIO MÉNDEZ

*The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life and Urban Violence in Colombia.* By HERBERT BRAUN. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986. Map. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xiii, 282. Cloth. \$32.50.

Most Colombians regard Jorge Eliécer Gaitán as a pivotal figure in their nation's history, whose assassination on April 9, 1948 irrevocably changed the course of events in the twentieth century. The dramatic career of this maverick Liberal, his tragic murder, and the ensuing riot known as the Bogotazo that destroyed much of downtown Bogotá have spawned voluminous literature in Spanish, but for many years failed to capture the attention of scholars writing in English. In 1978, Richard Sharpless published the first full-length Gaitán biography in English based on an exhaustive review of his personal archives. Now Colombian-born Herbert Braun expands the analysis by examining Gaitán's life and the

dynamics of the Bogotazo within the context of twentieth-century Colombian politics.

Rejecting frameworks commonly applied by political scientists to interpret Latin America, Braun argues that between 1930 and 1950 Colombian Liberals and Conservatives shared power within a unique political culture of “convivencia,” or the politics of civility in which they saw themselves as *civilistas* defending the institutions of the nation, rather than as caudillos leading the nation into war. Forming a narrow circle, these oligarchs regarded all outside their group as “pueblo.” They saw public life as a matter of intellectual creativity and attempted to forge a sense of community by instilling moral virtue and noble thoughts in the pueblo. As a man of humble origins, Gaitán, despite his prodigious efforts, was never fully accepted by the *convivialistas*. By identifying with the aspirations of the millions who formed the pueblo and by convincing them that his interests were their interests, he shook “convivencia” to the core. Gaitán’s death and the response of his enraged followers shattered the old relationship between leaders and masses, and Colombia broke apart into the civil war called La Violencia.

In the first two-thirds of the book, Braun reinterprets the life of “the most maligned public man of Colombia” (p. 6) against the backdrop of “convivencia,” drawing on his writings, as well as on information gleaned from interviews conducted with his closest associates. He devotes the last third to a meticulous reconstruction of the Bogotazo. Observing that historians have dismissed the rioters as “an expression of a barbarous underside of Colombian society” (p. 4), Braun uses oral and written accounts to describe their actions and to set forth their feelings. He concludes that the surprising aspect of the Bogotazo was not the looting but that the behavior of the crowd can be understood “in terms of the historical relationship between the pueblo and the *convivialistas* and Gaitán’s relationship to both” (p. 204). Gaitán had made the crowd feel that they could participate in political decisions. His death thrust them back to their deferential and reviled place. Unwilling to move back and unable to move forward, their anger had only one outlet—the destruction of a society in which they could no longer live.

As biography, social history, and political analysis, Braun’s book is a tour de force whose appeal will not be limited to Colombianists. Combining the methodology of historians and social scientists, he exposes the pitfalls of applying generic theories to unique circumstances. While rehabilitating the rioters, he treats the *convivialistas* with objective sympathy, and the Gaitán that emerges is not a superhero but a man flawed by ambition and egomania. Best of all, Braun has captured the drama of these tumultuous events. At the cry “¡Mataron a Gaitán!” he thrusts the reader into the crowd that sought to revenge its leader and brought an end to an era.

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

JANE M. RAUSCH