

the publication of E. P. Thompson's celebrated criticism of Althusser. This has been part of an extended reflection on historiography and an exercise that took seriously the lives, hopes, struggles, victories and defeats of common people—peasants, weavers, spinners, cobblers. And some of the authors, most notably Hill and Thompson, have contributed to an appreciation for and conceptualization of culture that is rooted in, but not reduced to, a complex social experience that includes political struggle.

Most anthropologists who have thought about such questions will have read at least some of the work discussed in this book. Few will have read it all: they might know Thompson better than Hill, or Hobsbawm better than Hilton. This is a shame; Hill's work on the culture and politics of 17th-century England is almost ethnographic in detail and is always rich in insight. Hilton's work on medieval peasants offers important material on inequality and class formation, along with a healthy skepticism regarding the applicability of a common set of concepts to 13th-century and 20th-century "peasants." Kaye's book will therefore serve as a guide for the student just setting out as well as the scholar who is already familiar with both the questions and the authors. The virtues of Kaye's book are many and obvious: he offers an appreciation of the work of the group as a whole, including a good short history of the formation of the Historians' Group and the early years of *Past and Present*. He also pays attention to these historians' various disagreements, both theoretical and political. For each of the authors he offers a brief biographical sketch and a summary of their major works. Where those works provoked critical comment or debate, this is also summarized. Where those works inspired similar projects, these receive treatment as well. As a result, the reader comes away with a good sense of the general shape of the literature and the specific place of the work of these socialist historians within it. As another result, the work of other scholars who are not given the full treatment receive extensive discussion. Perry Anderson's work, for example, is summarized in that part of the chapter on Dobb that deals with the literature on transitions as well as in the chapter on Thompson. Kaye's research has been thorough and offers bibliographic gems throughout.

The book's weaknesses are apparent as well. An oft-used verb in the preceding paragraph points to one: Kaye leans heavily toward summary. In some cases this works well. His treatment of Hill, for example, which traces major themes through Hill's various works on the English Revolution, is clear and informative. His treatment of Thompson, however, fails to communicate the richness of *The Making of the English Working Class* because it resorts to a tiresome chapter-by-chapter report. Although the author has a point of view (for example, he disagrees with those who see a major break between Dobb and the others), it is not sufficiently multifaceted nor strongly stated to carry the weight of a book.

One also wishes that Kaye had paid more attention to context. Although he situates the individual authors and has much to say about the Marxist literature they were building on and reacting against, he has relatively little to say about other historio-

graphical traditions. In the conclusion he briefly discusses the *Annales* and other traditions in social history in an attempt to show what is unique about the "collective contribution" of the British Marxists, but the discussion is inadequate. It might have come in an introduction, and it should not have allowed the perceived contribution of his chosen scholars to set the terms for description and discussion of other traditions. This reviewer shares Kaye's opinion about the relative merit of the work done by the British socialists and those working in other traditions, but Kaye does not adequately support his opinion here.

Nonetheless, this clearly written book will be useful for the scholar who is working on questions of class, culture, and politics and for the teacher who is trying to introduce students to a rich and important tradition.

***The Assassination of Gaitán: Public Life and Urban Violence in Colombia.* HERBERT BRAUN. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. 282 pp., figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$32.50 (cloth).**

MICHAEL TAUSSIG
University of Michigan

Just after one o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, April the 9th, 1948, four shots rang out in downtown Bogotá and a man fell mortally wounded to the pavement. He was no ordinary man, although he embodied the hopes of the ordinary man, and perhaps woman, too, and such was the shock, the anger, and the grief that whipped through the city at the news of his assassination that within hours downtown Bogotá was razed by the enraged multitude (it looked like a European city that had been bombed in World War II, according to a visiting Red Cross official). Other cities followed suit, and once the army had restored "order," following a tense period in which the generals were paralyzed by their own confusion and it looked as though their troops might side with the people, then the *Violencia* in the countryside advanced from its already impressive level (14,000 killings in 1947) to claim some 200,000 more assassinations, often ritualized, over the next decade.

This is the tragic story of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán now retold in a skillfully written and highly intelligent book by Herbert Braun who, I gather, spent much if not all his youth in Bogotá and undertook graduate studies in the United States where he now teaches history. This is also a story of populism and of the shifting fortunes of that mysterious entity, the crowd, the folk, the people, the masses, *el pueblo*, which, despite its mysteriousness and power in modern history, has, strangely enough, only very rarely attracted the interest of anthropologists; perhaps because of their relentlessly microscopic focus on the local scene, or their disinclination (if not inability) to consider the power of culture in the processes that create the meaning and the wealth of nations. Professor Braun's book is thus a timely (and solemn) reminder of why, and to some extent, how, such disciplinary habits should be set aside.

Born in 1898 as the eldest son of a schoolteacher

mother and a financially unsuccessful secondhand bookstore-owning father, both stalwarts of the Liberal Party, Gaitán was determined from early in life not to be restrained by his family's poverty. Strikingly ambitious from his schoolboy years, he rejected discipline and was expelled from various schools where he began his long career in political oratory and constantly argued with his teachers. But his mother's work as a Liberal educator caught the eye of the President of the Republic who arranged a post for Gaitán, enabling him to pursue a university education and become a lawyer. (He was already well on the way to becoming a successful politician.) Mixing with many of the literati of the city, publishing articles and interviews, reading widely in art, literature and sociological theory, he threw himself into organizing the University Center for Cultural Propaganda, the aim of which was to spread the fruits of learning—particularly in science and public health—to the *pueblo*. He worked vigorously with the Liberal Party but "he could not help clashing," writes Professor Braun, "with his social betters and with the established powers within both parties. Almost imperceptibly, even to himself, he transcended the bounds of accepted behavior in the most inconspicuous and routine of acts" (p. 45). He found it difficult to defer.

As a lawyer he became famous for his defense of victims of injustice and poverty. He instinctively sought those public forums which gave him an emotive face to face contact with the *pueblo* from which he claimed his origin, to which he pledged allegiance, and with which he passionately (at times it seems almost erotically) fused. Professor Braun emphasizes that this passionate evocation of the people is what clearly separates Gaitán from the leadership of the great political machines, the Liberal and the Conservative Parties, and that this style represented a decisive break with the culture of the class formation in Colombia as that formation structured the meanings of public and private space. Gaitán was famous for his oratory, which apparently shocked the old guard of professional politicians (including the Communists) on account of his impetuosity, use of lower class idioms, and dismissal of "reason"—or at least the use of the stylistics of reason, calmness, and compromise which was crucial to the elite's manifestation of its management of politics. "Emotion was what his oratory was all about," writes Braun (p. 83). At the height of his campaign for the presidency in 1946 he gave, without effort, eight or ten speeches daily and in his entire oratorical career he wrote out in advance only five speeches. "When I am in front of the *pueblo*," he said, "I am fundamentally transformed. I feel an irrepresible emotion, an intoxication without limits" (p. 83). He thought of himself as a "deep interpreter" of the *pueblo*. "Between the anonymous crowd and the man who rose from poverty to chastize the rich and the powerful there existed," insists Professor Braun, "an affinity that the politicians of the elite could never have elicited" (p. 83). It is tempting to conclude that Gaitán spoke *with* and not *only for* the *pueblo*. But that overlooks what was also essential to his popularity: his own brand of crushing paternalism. And the people loved it. Populism, apparently, does not mean or require a lessening of the distance between the leader and

the led. In fact, in some ways this distance seems to increase, as if by becoming the embodiment of the will of the people, the leader is thus deified. Whenever he was with a large crowd Gaitán made a point of acknowledging the splendor of their collective experience, referring to it as the first in the nation's history. "Yo no soy un hombre, soy un pueblo," he would declaim. ("I'm not a man, but the people.") And the audience loved it: "¡A la carga! A la victoria! ¡Pueblo! ¡Contra la oligarquía!" (pp. 102–103). If politics in Colombia had long had something of the quality of a secular Church, and the two great parties in the fervent solidarity of their binary opposition were each blessed with their own *mística*, then Gaitán's novelty was not (as is often claimed) to add more *mística*, but rather to redirect or make such mysticism more explicit, and to more firmly secure it to the symbolism of the *pueblo*. It might be noted that the *mística* of the parties had, since the mid or late 19th century, assured a joint and not simply an antagonistic management of the state by the professional politicians and this is why Professor Braun adopts the local nomenclature and calls such politicians *convivialistas*—those who could *convivir*, live together, despite the almost primordial hatred dividing the two parties. What makes Gaitán intriguing, therefore, is that the *convivialistas*, by definition so adroit at co-optation, could not *convivir* with him and that as a result of incessant labor during the 1930s and 1940s he was able to break the party machines, in many ways the metabolism of the republic, and steal away with their *mística*. One only wishes that Professor Braun would have problematized *mística* and attempted to explain to us what it was (is) and how it works. In reifications such as *mística* one finds the politicians' coinage, that magic which guides the implicit social knowledge of political behavior.

Forced to work outside of the machinery of the Liberal Party, Gaitán had little else than his style, ideas, and untapped powers of popular culture on which to draw. No doubt the appeal he made depended on his class-based social theories, which strike me as the work of a bold and original mind very much in step with Colombian (and much of third world) realities. But his appeal had also a great deal to do with the emotional artistry with which he disseminated those ideas, and while Professor Braun splendidly evokes Gaitán's style it is nevertheless a pity that we are not supplied with at least part of Gaitán's orations so we can learn from and judge the man's use of sign and symbol, especially as they were wrenched from conventional political discourse and reactivated within the symbolic language of the *pueblo*—for surely the *pueblo* is not simply an entity preformed and listening, but is made by such discourse? Equally necessary here would be texts from the *convivialistas* or "mainstream" politicians so that we could see in what ways Gaitán differed. But Professor Braun neglects to do both these things and rests his depiction on Gaitán's "emotional display," on the one hand, and his political theories, on the other. The crucial middle zone of sign making and changing where so much of popular culture making occurs is hence lost to us and Gaitán, rather than *Gaitanismo*, the person rather than the cultural personification, takes center stage.

As for those political theories, Herbert Braun delineates these clearly as based on Gaitán's vision of the social destruction wrought by capitalist development, which could, and should, be checked by creating a society of hard working petty capitalist entrepreneurs, with the family as the cornerstone. Later, this 1920s ideal became modified as a vision of a society of small property owners and propertyless laborers held in equilibrium by the state. This is certainly the ideal I most frequently came across in the plantations and towns of western Colombia much later on, in the 1970s, and it needs to be carefully considered as a popular desire. Morality and order were constant themes with Gaitán and he was notorious for the tenacity of his attempts to make people wash, wear shoes, and discard the *ruana* (*poncho*) as steps necessary for the civilizing of the *pueblo*. Not for him the "backward looking" indigenist symbols of populism that proved so binding in other parts of Latin America. As mayor of Bogotá in the early 1930s he not only expanded schooling and school meals but also demanded that taxi and bus drivers wear uniforms because (he held that) drivers of public vehicles were disseminators of disease. "Hygiene," he declared in true Positivist fashion (he had studied with the great Positivist legal scholars in Rome and won a coveted award) "was the backbone of the modern state" (p. 73). Foucault would have agreed.

His political organization seems to have been modelled on the lines of an army with its strict hierarchy and ranks such as "popular captains" and "heroic combatants," and far from spurning the appurtenances of the hated oligarchy, Gaitán was noted as a snappy dresser with the latest "American" automobile. Nevertheless he was denied entry into the exclusive Jockey Club. Poor man. No wonder the poor felt for him.

It is a fascinating paradox that despite hitching his movement to science, hygiene, progress, and Positivism, Gaitán's increasingly fearful opponents, leading the traditional party pillars of the republic, identified him and his followers as primitivistic and fascist once they saw he was likely to win the presidential election of 1948 (and this portrayal was made by the communists too). At issue was not merely the civilizing mission but the very existence of culture itself. Here primitivism and modernism made strange bedfellows. Depicting Gaitán as "the malicious Indian" (after all he was dark and came from a poor, albeit urban, home), the ruling elite went on to represent his followers as an African rabble bent on killing whites. With Gaitán, the country would be returned to its African and Indian roots; such was their warning. As Gaitán began to broadcast by radio, in 1948, the Conservative Party newspaper, *El Siglo*, claimed that "in the most advanced systems of modernity . . . the radio waves are made for the malicious Indian" (p. 122). While the upper classes read the newspapers, asserts Braun, the lower classes listened to the radio. For its part, the Liberal Party paper declared that radio represented the decadence of both the written and the spoken word, hence of culture itself. Radio left the speaker out of sight of an atomized audience and it was this combination that allowed radio to change democracy into a society ruled by the masses. Catch 22: if Gaitán was not to be pilloried for being too close

and passionate with his audience, he was to be condemned for being too alien.

By 1947 he was in effect the *jefe único* of the Liberal Party (thanks largely to the urban vote) and he had the ruling elite in a panic. His momentum seemed unstoppable. The time of the ordinary man—that atom in the multitude geared to the waves of the modern invention, the radio—was about to begin. Then as Bogotá became the stage for the great spectacle of the 1948 Pan American Conference, as heads of state and other dignitaries arrived, and as the beggars were driven off the streets (as they were recently for the Pope's visit) and stray dogs poisoned, then for what will apparently forever remain obscure motives, a lone assailant gunned down Gaitán in the street from whence had come his power and to which his anguished followers, the *pueblo*, took not to steal but to destroy, as a woman screamed, in order "to end everything" (p. 160). Nobody was able to step in and take Gaitán's place. The headless crowd surged in ways that lost it whatever political opportunities were created by the upheaval. When normalcy was restored days later, it was at the cost of a political solution that would cause vast numbers of killings over the following decades of the *Violencia* and afterwards, in a strange limbo between dictatorship and democracy managed in the same *convivialista* fashion as before, with an elite sharing power between the two great parties, maintaining the *pueblo* as a resentful mass now shorn of its dream. Witness the rerun of *Gaitanismo* with the rise of General Rojas, and then with the formation of the M 19 guerrilla organization following the election fraud which stole Rojas' victory from him in 1970. Surely the M 19, the most powerful guerrilla movement in South America today, is the return of Gaitán's vengeful ghost.

The *pueblo* no less than its ideological counterpart, the nation, depends upon death for its sustenance, and it is strange that no cult of remembrance of Gaitán exists today. Yet I am reminded of an almost underground stream of remembrance erupting him into the world of the living, akin to one of those "flashes" of the past of which Walter Benjamin wrote, as well as to the frequent if intermittent visitations made by the lost souls of Purgatory (such as José Gregorio Hernández). It was at a small political meeting I attended in a sugar plantation town in western Colombia in 1970, 22 years after Gaitán's assassination. The people were mainly men, lower middle class and small peasant farmers, determined to break the power of the local oligarchy and priests. As the moonlight scudded over the flowers in the patio the meeting was begun by playing a scratchy record on a hand wound machine. It was Gaitán, orating, beseeching, exhorting—great hollows of sound passing into the hollows of the night. People stood to attention. It was a town that a little later voted heavily for Rojas and from where the M 19 recruits heavily. And to understand this is to appreciate not only the poverty, the lack of food and the open sewers, but also how, combined with a deeply anarchic set of attitudes to politics, there can be a blind adherence to the heroes and leaders of the *pueblo*. Saluting the nation's flag and singing the national anthem, young people are ready to die for the *pueblo*; some on the side of the guerrilla, others on the side of the state's army.

Professor Braun's history should be of special interest to readers of this journal because he relies in part on oral accounts provided by Gaitán's followers and by participants in the destruction of Bogotá on April 9th. But much more could have been developed here. The accounts are largely plundered for "bits" of information when surely what is equally at stake is the mosaic of intersecting narratives in the fullness of their imagination and legend-creating tone. Only then will we begin to understand the complex syntheses of thought and feeling that constitute *pueblo* political philosophy with its notions of justice and redemption, equality and envy, to which movements such as Gaitán's give voice, reworking the sentiments and signs invested in the meaning of the nation and its people. This omission is made all the more poignant when Professor Braun cites the Peruvian novelist Vargas Llosa to the effect that stories (such as the one(s) people in Colombia relate about Gaitán and the *Bogotazo*) "aren't written to recount life, but to transform it by adding something to it" (p. xi).

A particularly noteworthy feature of this book is the skill with which the author describes the strategies and shifting alliances of party politics as Gaitán moved in and out of the rules of the game. Moreover, Professor Braun's way of doing this with his declared aim of breaking with the "convention of macrohistorical social science dominated thinking about the Latin American past and future" (a social science that includes positivist as well as many marxist positions), is, I think, commendable and partially fulfilled. One is, however, always dependent on "theory" and he does in fact place quite a burden on an alleged shift in the public/private dichotomization of social life as this dichotomy was supposedly affected by capitalist development, on the one hand, and by populist representations of it, in this case Gaitán's, on the other. Perhaps the vagueness which plagues this recurrent feature of the book could have been overcome by some more theoretical consideration, for example by reference to marxist (rather than Gino Germani's Modernization) analysis of that elusive chameleon, populism—such as we find with Ernesto Laclau's insightful (for all its Althusserian gobbledygook) 1977 essay, "Towards a Theory of Populism," which tackles head on the dialectical tension in populism between the ideological construct of "the people" and the social classes in which they so unevenly nestle. Laclau asks how populism disarticulates the often contradictory elements of dominant ideology so as to rearticulate their differences no longer as neutral but as antagonistic to the state and the ruling class, and how, in so doing, populism deploys popular traditions (which are generally more enduring than social structure). But these are not issues of direct concern to Braun, although his work gives us plenty to consider in this regard. His tendency is to back off from any theoretical discussion and thereby spasmodically ventilate a rather banal and essentialist class theory in which the "petty bourgeois" and lumpenproletariat (he does not use this term) take a great deal of the causal weight for *Gaitanismo*. Surely these classes were and still are exceedingly important. But just as surely populism is a unique configuration of classes, and how classes perceive and dream is not given by class location

alone. When Professor Braun claims early in his book that "the politicians of Colombia compelled me, through their beliefs and their behavior, to look to the culture through which they, Gaitán among them, explained their reality," we are made forcefully aware of the great gap between "looking" at a culture, "seeing" that culture, and conveying what is powerful about what is seen not so much of reality but of the fictions that constitute a multiplicity of conflicting realities. Anthropologists as a matter of disciplinary concern choose constantly to try their hand at such conveyance, with no greater success. This task, at the level of what Benedict Anderson felicitously chose to call "the imagined community" of the nation, lies every day more clearly before us. We are beholden to Professor Braun's fine book on the tragedy of Gaitán, which is the tragedy of a nation, for making us see better how, and why, we should go about it.

***Mafia, Peasants and Great Estates: Society in Traditional Calabria.* PINO ARLACCHI. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. ix + 212 pp., tables, figures, footnotes, index. \$24.95 (cloth).**

JAMES L. WATSON
University of Pittsburgh

This is an important book that deserves to be read by all anthropologists who are interested in the relationship between local political systems and the state. Pino Arlacchi is an Italian sociologist working in the marxian tradition of agrarian analysis; unlike so many of his colleagues, however, Arlacchi's use of marxian terminology illuminates rather than obscures. *Mafia, Peasants and Great Estates* would make an excellent text for graduate seminars on political anthropology.

Arlacchi begins by taking a single region of southern Italy (Calabria, located in the toe of the Italian boot) and isolating three distinct "area types" that are geographically close but sociologically distant. All three of these local systems operate within the context of the Italian state and national economy, but they constitute separate "models of underdevelopment."

The first system is what Arlacchi calls a "peasant society"; it emerged in the Corsentino, a huge valley surrounded by mountains in the center of Calabria. Here one finds close-knit families that engage in ritualized exchanges, sometimes in deviance of "economically rational" behavior. Marriage, according to Arlacchi, is a "total social fact" that anchors peasants in kinship networks; those who cannot marry (dowry is high) are spun out of the local system and become vagabonds or social exiles. Economic life in the Corsentino is dominated by family enterprises and, as such, peasants are relatively detached from the market. Agriculture is highly diversified as befitting a society that values self-sufficiency.

Arlacchi's second "area type" is the Plain of Gioia Tauro, not far from the Corsentino peasant communities mentioned above. The Plain is a "society in permanent transition" marked by social instability and mafia control. Arlacchi's discussion