The source material for this study is a broad body of archival documents in Bogotá and Caracas, with particular insight gained from newspapers, constitutions, political pamphlets and published sermons of the era. These historians have exhumed a body of work with such success that it now seems surprising that no one had done this before them. They explain and illustrate how contemporaries understood 'the order of majesty', how they resisted it, and how they eventually reconfigured it towards a sense of popular sovereignty that might sustain the integrity of the new republics. Thibaud and Calderón present 'Independence' as a salvage effort, in which leaders and their *pueblos* tried to rescue something from the unexpected chaos and disintegration that they inherited as a legacy from the implosion of the Spanish empire.

According to the authors, what distinguishes the experience of New Granada and Venezuela from other Hispanic American processes is that the Constitution of Cádiz was never enacted there, precisely because of the successes of military leaders such as Antonio Nariño and Simón Bolívar before the *reconquista* of 1814–15. This left 'a complex co-existence between the sovereignty of the people [as established at Cádiz] and the sovereignty of the pueblos' (p. 89), building upon the corporate nature of colonial governance, and giving full rein to calls for autonomy and independence of regions and towns from Spain *and from each other* in the second wave of warfare after 1816. The book also deals with the vexed questions of federalism, regalism and citizenship, and how they developed in relation to the concept of majesty as it was shaped by warfare and Atlantic connections. The authors are particularly insightful, in chapter 5, on the gulf that separated 'immediate citizenship', as won and performed by soldiers on the battlefield, from real, civic citizenship which was understood as representative, rather than direct. They also argue persuasively (chapter 6) that a crucial moment for the success of independence occurred around 1820, when the conflict was reconceptualised as anti-colonial (against foreigners), rather than as sacrilegious (against God). Bolívar's proclamation of the War to the Death in 1813 was crucial in performing this change.

The last two chapters illustrate the playing out of these changes between 1826 and 1832, the end of the Gran Colombian moment, which historians focusing on the current bicentennial years of 1808–12 are neglecting. There is an excellent discussion of the Ocaña Convention (1828), for example, and the growing phenomenon of the *pronunciamiento* in New Granada. Thibaud and Calderón show how a nascent sense of nation emerged from a sense of the majesty of the pueblos. Unity and liberty, some came to see, might not be incompatible. This excellent book must be required reading for historians seeking to understand the processes and consequences of independence from colonial rule in Hispanic America.

University of Bristol MATTHEW BROWN

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Pamela S. Murray, *For Glory and Bolívar: The Remarkable Life of Manuela Sáenz* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008), pp. xiv + 222, £42.00, hb.

Given both the constant interest in Simón Bolívar and the enduring popularity of biography as a genre, it comes as quite a surprise to discover that there has been very little about the Liberator's great love, Manuela Sáenz, available to English-language readers. In fact, before the publication of Pamela Murray's book, there had been only one previous biography of Sáenz in English, and even that was written nearly 60 years

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ago by Victor von Hagen. Luckily for students and general-interest readers alike, Pamela Murray has created an engaging, fast-paced, modern life-history of the woman sometimes called La Libertadora. The book is a welcome addition, not primarily for its contribution to the massive and growing body of work on Bolívar, but rather as a case study for research on the nature of changing gender roles in the transition to Independence that has been done by Sarah Chambers, Arlene Díaz, Guiomar Dueñas and others.

Pamela Murray has demonstrated several notable strengths in this short, comprehensive biography. First, her ability to place Sáenz's life effectively within its social and political matrix is impressive and reflects a methodology known as the 'New Biography'. By stressing life story as performance, 'new' biographers utilise insights from literary criticism and postmodern theory to frame the range of possibilities available to the subject at any particular moment. Murray's biography is also very clear in its intent to focus specifically on Sáenz, and successfully resists the temptation to become distracted by the overwhelming presence of Bolívar in her life. The author is able to keep her attention firmly on La Libertadora herself, while drawing on insights from research into women's history to add more depth to the gendered nature of her subject's experiences. Third, this book excels at the central purpose of any biography, namely bringing a historical figure back to life. In Murray's deftly crafted account, Manuela Sáenz becomes a recognisable human being with a distinct personality. Finally, the author has added value to her study by including an interesting discussion of La Libertadora's posthumous life – that is to say, the way in which her memory has been pressed into service on behalf of contemporary political groups or causes. Manuela Sáenz's reputation has become a battleground where various political factions can stake their own claims to legitimacy based on particular interpretations of her actions and even her very essence.

In Pamela Murray's biography Manuela Sáenz springs to life as a real person, someone who lived and breathed and who had her own strengths and weaknesses. She was a woman who did not always behave with judgement or consistency but whose actions made sense in the exact moment in which they occurred. Details of the domestic arrangements between Sáenz and Bolívar, for example, are intimate and surprisingly sweet. Early in their relationship, during one of their frequent separations, Sáenz became distraught at the rumour that Bolívar was having an affair. She pressed for information about the company he was keeping and told a mutual friend that she felt panicky and feared she might die as a result of the possible betrayal (p. 39). In another example, on the night of a well-known attempt on his life in September 1828, Bolívar had been cranky, taken a bath, and fallen asleep while she read to him in bed with their dogs barking in the background (p. 66). After Bolívar's death, a grief-stricken Sáenz starts chain-smoking cigarillos and falls into a depression. The cumulative effect of these well-chosen details is that Manuela Sáenz is made an authentic human being, subject to the same emotions and having many of the same common life experiences as the rest of us.

Murray has done an excellent job of utilising as much extant documentation for Sáenz's life as can be located. In the course of her research, she visited archives in six countries and consulted the printed memoirs of dozens of contemporary people who knew the subject personally. Murray is a good and careful historian, always identifying where the gaps in documentation might be and seeking balance among the various competing accounts. She has two main content-related problems, however, which are not uncommon in biographies. First, there are significant periods of Sáenz's life for

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which no evidence has survived. This unfortunate circumstance often forces the author to keep the narrative continuity going by telling the story *around* her subject rather than the story *of* her subject. Murray is aware of this challenge and handles the unavoidable gaps by clearly identifying the limits of her source base as she goes along. Another difficult challenge for biographers is the problem of first discerning and then documenting the subject's internal motivation. This latter issue has more frustrating results for readers of this specific biography because of the many instances in which the author asserts that something might have happened, or a person might have been thinking something, or been motivated by something. Although these types of conjecture are always based on logic and available evidence, there are enough of them in this biography for the cumulative effect to be noticeable.

Pamela Murray's biography of Manuela Sáenz is well written, intensively researched, and engagingly told. The author has incorporated the best recent research into the activities and changing status of women during the Independence era to put La Libertadora's experience into its proper context. In several places there are interesting hints of the way race, class and gender intersected to shape the parameters of her life's possibilities. Sáenz's national affiliations also shifted over the course of her life, underscoring the fluidity of both nation and identity in the early republican era. This modern, professional, nuanced retelling of Manuela Sáenz's biography is a welcome addition to the growing body of work on Latin American women's history, and will also be useful to those interested in the Independence era more generally.

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William Edmundson, *The Nitrate King: A Biography of 'Colonel' John Thomas North* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. xxviii + 186, £55.00; $85.00, hb.

Largely forgotten in the country of his birth and often pilloried in Chile, John Thomas North appears the epitome of a late nineteenth-century entrepreneur, a self-made man who worshipped his creator. From humble origins in Leeds – although not as deprived, it seems, as he sometimes pretended – North grew rich from involvement in nitrate extraction on the west coast of South America during the 1870s and 1880s, and in supplying the crucial complementary services – transport, provisioning and banking – on which mining depended, earning himself the soubriquet of the 'Nitrate King'.

North understood the value of self-promotion, and being in the right place at the right time, allied to a willingness to take risks, seems to have been the secret of his success. He rode his luck, shrewdly choosing business associates such as Robert Harvey, the inspector-general of nitrates under the Peruvian and then the Chilean governments; John Dawson, the Iquique manager of the Banco de Valparaíso; William and John Lockett of the eponymous Liverpool merchant house; and Maurice Jewell, the British consul at Iquique. Having acquired valuable *salitreras* (nitrate deposits), he floated companies in London to which he sold the mines, earning a fortune in the process. Towards the end of his career North was essentially a financier, probably more interested in buying and selling enterprises for short-term capital gain than in a long-term commitment to running them; also, just before his death, he seems to have lost interest in nitrate in favour of Welsh coal, gold-mining in Australia

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