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**McAllister, C. & D. Nelson (Eds.) War by Other Means: Aftermath in Post-Genocide Guatemala. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013.**

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**McAllister, C. & D. Nelson (Eds.) *War by Other Means: Aftermath in Post-Genocide Guatemala*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2013.**

*War by Other Means* is an edited volume revolving around one main question, namely why war continues in an apparently post-genocide Guatemala. The contributing authors address the effects of the violence of Guatemala's Armed Conflict, including the violence inflicted by insurgency groups and the subsequent counterinsurgency violence, which culminated in a period of genocide in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with various forms of postwar violence continuing to this day. The editors claim that the effects of this violence are "both specific to the qualities and histories of specific places" (p. 9). The essays examine the aftermath of a war that is, despite its "conclusion," largely still present in current Guatemalans' lives. At this point, war in Guatemala seems only to have changed its shape and size while becoming at once both more confusing and illogical and, at the same time, more sophisticated. This volume unites engaged and activist authors in the fields of anthropology, geography, economy, and history. Together, they are able not only to shed light on the tragedy of war and its aftermath, including a diversity of types of contemporary postwar violence, but also to make a magnificent link between past and present. This link was made possible as a direct result of the inclusion of the work of not only many well-recognized Western scholars who have been working in the country for many decades but also a variety of excellent Guatemalan voices that are often left out of scholarly discussions on the region. An additional highlight of this volume is the considerable bibliography on the post-genocide era. Likewise, the ethnographic richness, at times very deep and personal, and the well-written chapters make this volume intriguing, and the diversity of topics shows the complexity of the aftermath of the war in Guatemala. This complexity ranges from a historical overview of Guatemala as a so called "captive state" to the country's inheritance of a colonial economy, leading to a race-divided Guatemala. Also examined are Mayan movements and politics, the resettlement of refugees of the Armed Conflict, economic megaprojects relating to forced displacements, the continuation of power of the old elites, new forms of urban violence and the evolution of street gangs in urban areas, the rights of women and indigenous peoples, the challenges of historical memory, and popular narratives of future perspectives.

Due to its plurality of contributions, the book is divided into four main sections. The first section deals with the theme "Surveying the Landscape: Histories of the Present" and addresses the heritage of colonial times and state violence and analyzes the country's indigenous political organization in a post-Cold War context and how war has shaped the region's traumas and future political perspectives. Greg Grandin gives a historical overview of over 500 years of the region's history that focuses on the interaction between indigenous communities and the state, from its inception until the beginning of the genocide in the late 1970s. He details the state's labor regimes and counterinsurgency strategies, which lays for the reader a basis for understanding contemporary Guatemalan violence. Santiago Bastos and Manuela Camus analyze the history of the Coordination of Maya People's Organization and its complex relationships with leftist guerrilla insurgency groups, which have resulted in overlapping struggles for ethnic/indigenous rights alongside those of class-based or revolutionary interests. And finally, Carlota McAllister writes about a silence that has resulted from political violence and genocide and the recent humanitarian demand for testimonial narratives, particularly those that will verify the truth of past happenings, in hopes of influencing both future political ideas of historical memory.

Section two, "Market Freedoms and Market Forces: The New Biopolitical Economy," analyzes neoliberal interests in megaprojects, land struggles and reforms, and the evolution of agrarian policies. Luis Solano illuminates the networks of power of the "everlasting elite"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Oligarchs with political and economic powers since many decades, or even centuries.

and military engagement in the transnational project of the building of the Franja Transversal del Norte thoroughfare, a modern highway constructed in 2010 that connects the country's northern region, rich in natural resources, to convenient shipping locations. His text intends to analyze the connection between the Armed Conflict and the financial interests of the state and the aspiration for the accumulation of goods. Elizabeth Oglesby writes about "sugar elites", oligarchs in the national sugar industry, (with growing interest in the opportunities presented by biofuel) and the changing labor relations on sugar plantations. She addresses the difficulties of achieving harmony among peasants and indigenous peoples, particularly as revolutionary struggles result in ongoing structural and physical violence (p. 172), and examines the transformation of internal labor migration and fragmentation of the labor unions, as well as changes in power relations. Velasquez Nimatuj investigates in her case study among a Maya-Mam community the social damage that hurricanes, famines, international trade agreements, and the "coffee crisis" have caused, resulting in, among other things, mass unemployment. Furthermore she analyzes the community members' relation to the state, especially in its judicial and social service functions (p. 172) and international agencies. She moreover shows how hope for a better future can ultimately destroy families and community projects when mass migration to Northern America seems to be the only option, leaving a lack of inhabitants behind.

The third section, "Means to an Ends: Neoliberal Transparency and Its Shadows," addresses the post peace-agreement years, during which frustrations about the impossibility of positive change often overcame efforts to realize such change. Deborah Levensson writes a touching essay about the evolution of Guatemala City's "maras," or gangs. Her early work (conducted when she first did her fieldwork among urban youth in 1987, before mass deportations from the US began) examined early gang activity, which was, at the time, propelled by the themes of brotherhood and the protection of the poor, *i.e.*, "gangs to live for." In contrast, her later work profiles modern gangs (*i.e.*, "gangs to die for"), whose members are willing to commit violent crimes and die in the name of gang membership and allegiance. According to Levensson, the former type of gang is characterized by the idea of a Robin Hood phenomenon, occurring when the gangs believe themselves to stand up for their (poor) communities and provide protective services against the wealthy exploiters. The latter group type is an evolved and better organized criminal group of youth who grew up during counterinsurgency, with exposure to excessive violence, in an era in which the solidarity of earlier gangs was destroyed by the military. As a consequence, the image of youth gangs changed from the image of "the good guys" standing up for their people to the "malos" or "bad ones," who are generally universally feared. Indeed, as inhibitions regarding the use of violence declined, killing started to become a regular practice. Paul Kobrak addresses this destruction of social ties when he examines the rural community of Colotenango and its manipulation by both the military, by means of the introduction of the Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil (PAC, *engl.*: Civilian Self-Defense Patrols), and by the Guerillas<sup>2</sup>, with a continuing manipulation into postwar times. Jennifer Burrell addresses the consequences of the war in the postwar context, examining citizen-state relationships, often including feelings of personal vengeance and resentment on the part of Guatemalan citizens of the lawless, violent, and chaotic nature of their day-to-day lives. Such violence, culminates in a fear of, among other things, child abduction (looking to perform "satanic rituals"). As a case study of this everyday violence, she gives a detailed ethnographic description of the lynching of a Guatemalan bus driver and a Japanese tourist in Todos Santos Chuchumatán. Matilde González-Izás' essay is an insightful analysis of the local rural powers that emerged during the war as a result of rural community members' devotion to the counterinsurgency and their

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<sup>2</sup> The guerillas claimed civilian participation in their actions, through which they involuntarily justified military sanctions against civilians, and who attacked PAC members, although it was commonly known that they were civilians forced to join those forces (p.237)

persistent upholding of those powers in contemporary times, influencing women's rights and international development aid projects. As an example of locals' power, she illustrates an example in which an NGO attempting to strengthen local actors was entirely unaware of the locals' existing agency and former involvement with counterinsurgents.

The fourth and final section of the book, "Whither the future? Postwar Aspirations and Identifications," is dedicated to economics and class during the postwar era. Diane Nelson examines in a case study on Omnilife, a Mexican health product company, postwar economics, and the survival of indigenous women who may formerly have played a role in revolutionary actions. She analyzes their entrepreneurial endeavors and unpacks the effects of globalization on not only the services and products provided by such individuals but also on all people and money in the rural region of Joyabaj. Jorge Ramón González Ponciano explores themes of race and class ideas and interpersonal violence among high school students in Guatemala City. He argues that contemporary Guatemala is undergoing a symbolic war between the cosmopolitanism from "below," *i.e.*, of the growing ladino and indigenous diaspora communities in the US, and the cosmopolitanism from "above," *i.e.*, that belonging to the elites, who sustain oligarchic values related to plantain agriculture and the restriction of free movement for most Guatemalans (p. 309). The last chapter of the book, by Paula Worby, questions the mass return of refugees—including not only victims or survivors of the conflict, but also former combatants—from Mexico to the Guatemalan region of Ixcán. She problematizes the experience of returnees, who, after having become used to Mexican surroundings and rules, face, upon their return to Guatemala, internal conflicts about gender ideas, local politics, and economics. Recent returnees often find themselves fearful once again, as the continuing presence of the Guatemalan military and its allies as well as the presence and activity of drug traffickers and other criminal groups remain realities.

*War by Other Means* is a scholarly attempt to illuminate inequalities and injustices that Guatemala has experienced over the past 500 years. It provides, for both students and experts, a thorough history of the prolonged era of violence and the current movements, which have been inspired in order to permanently put an end to enduring violence. It would certainly be interesting to know how the editors would comment on the present-day happenings in Guatemala, where it seems that elites are finally being charged with corruption and fraud. Simultaneously, Guatemalans' indignation over centuries of exploitation and their current exertion of agency make the possibility of belonging to a different class or street group a sudden possibility.

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