

# MURDER, MEMORY, AND THE MAYA

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**For Every Indio Who Falls: A History of Maya Activism in Guatemala, 1960–1990.** By Betsy Konefal. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010. Pp. x + 247. \$29.95 paper. ISBN: 9780826348654.

**A Beauty That Hurts: Life and Death in Guatemala.** Second revised edition. By W. George Lovell. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010. Pp. xv + 206. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780292721838.

**After the Coup: An Ethnographic Reframing of Guatemala, 1954.** Edited by Timothy J. Smith and Abigail E. Adams. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. 2011. Pp. x + 167. \$22.00 paper. ISBN: 9780252077845.

**The Mayan in the Mall: Globalization, Development, and the Making of Modern Guatemala.** By J. T. Way. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012. Pp. x + 310. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822351313.

May 2013 was a historic month for Guatemala. After months of testimony and numerous legal delays and disputes in a landmark trial, a Guatemalan court convicted the country's ex-president General Efraín Ríos Montt of genocide and crimes against humanity committed against the country's poor during his fourteen-month presidency in the early 1980s. Though Ríos Montt's defense team argued that the general was protected from legal action by a clause in the country's 1996 Peace Accords<sup>1</sup> granting amnesty to those who conducted "war-related crimes" during the country's thirty-six-year conflict, a judge ordered Ríos Montt to stand trial. The genocide trial of the former dictator, alleged to be responsible for the deaths of 86,000 Maya, began on March 19, 2013.<sup>2</sup> His subsequent conviction on May 10, 2013, offered Guatemalans a glimpse of the justice that had eluded them for decades. Ten days later, however, Guatemala's Constitutional Court overturned the trial's verdict based on a procedural concern, annulling Ríos Montt's sentence and invalidating all trial proceedings after April 19.<sup>3</sup> When a new court postponed Ríos Montt's retrial indefinitely (at the time of the writing of this review, it has suggested January 2015 as a potential date for the new trial), it left the fate of the former president, and the future of the country, in limbo.

Though Ríos Montt's presidency ended nearly thirty years ago, it remains one

1. Susanne Jonas, "The Peace Accords: An End and a Beginning," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 30, no. 6 (1997): 6.

2. Richard Fausset, "Guatemala Official Takes On Nation's Ugly Past, Violent Present," *Los Angeles Times*, January 5, 2013.

3. Elisabeth Malkin, "Guatemalan Court Overturns Genocide Conviction of Ex-Dictator," *New York Times*, May 20, 2013.

of the darkest periods in Guatemala's history. Life in Guatemala has been forever marked by the violence and oppression of the civil war, lasting from 1960 to 1996. Recent scholarly publications on Guatemala explore the roots of its present-day challenges and inequalities. The works reviewed here contextualize Guatemala's contemporary circumstances in the defining moments of its history: the 1944 October Revolution, the 1954 coup that overthrew President Jacobo Árbenz, the ensuing decades of military repression, and the emergence of the Pan-Mayan movement. These works explore how Guatemala's long history of corruption, instability, ethnic discrimination, slow economic development, and systematic violence prompted the formation of indigenous political movements and impacted the experiences of its residents. They suggest that although Guatemala's civil war ended more than fifteen years ago, the country is not at peace. Peace, they show, is more than the mere absence of war; to achieve peace, Guatemala must confront and resolve the inequalities deeply rooted in its society. By documenting the atrocities of the last century and the cultural responses to them, these works enhance our understanding of how the legacy of Guatemala's past defines the realities of its present.

In 1954, a coup overthrew the government of Guatemalan president Jacobo Árbenz, ending the period that Guatemalans identify as the Ten Years of Spring. In 1944, Árbenz helped to overthrow the repressive dictator Jorge Ubico, who regarded rural campesinos as an obstacle impeding the country's modernization (Way, 37–38). Known as the October Revolution, the 1944 movement to overthrow Ubico espoused freedom and equality for all. Among the changes introduced following the October Revolution was President Árbenz's radical agrarian reform legislation. Árbenz's administration confiscated more than four hundred thousand acres of unused agricultural land from the United Fruit Company, which received \$1.25 million dollars for its loss (Lovell, 134). The United Fruit Company solicited assistance from the United States government, which deemed Árbenz a threat to national security.

The coup that ended Árbenz's presidency on June 27, 1954, irrevocably changed Guatemalan history. Timothy J. Smith and Abigail E. Adams's *After the Coup* critically examines the historical context of the coup. In Smith's introduction to the book, he argues that most ethnographic accounts of the coup inaccurately identify it as "CIA-backed" and trace the subsequent violence and oppression in Guatemala to this single event. Doing so minimizes the agency of those involved in the politics of this era. Smith writes, "We argue that to so heavily give weight to the United States, even given its decisive implication, reduces the coup to a U.S.-Guatemalan conflict and downplays the role of local and national actors in Guatemala" (Smith and Adams, 3). Smith points to Diane Nelson's influential work *Reckoning*, in which she states that "no single cut began or ended" the war.<sup>4</sup> Instead, he argues, one must examine the events before and after the coup to understand the factors that led to the war and to its end.

*After the Coup* reveals that while scholars attribute many contemporary Gua-

4. Diane M. Nelson, *Reckoning: The Ends of War in Guatemala* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 74.

temalan problems to the end of the Ten Years of Spring, their points of origin are hard to pinpoint. Chapters by David Carey Jr. and Christa Little-Siebold raise interesting questions about indigenous attitudes toward Ubico's dictatorship and the democratic ideals of the Ten Years of Spring. Carey asks, "If scholars have identified the 1954 coup as a watershed in Guatemala's history, why do so many Mayas fail to emphasize it?" (Smith and Adams, 73). He states that the Kaqchikel attribute little significance to the 1954 coup. Rather, other events play a more significant role in their historical memory as contributing to contemporary circumstances. Many Maya, Carey states, felt unsure of their place in the country after the end of Ubico's regime and preferred the demands of an oppressive dictator to the insecurity of a democratic future (Smith and Adams, 76). Carey documents several conflicts that arose following the 1944 transition to democracy when groups with differing political ideals confronted the uncertainty of their future. Carey concludes, "For Mayas, as for most people, local experiences and threats are as important as national (and international) ones" (Smith and Adams, 90).

Like Carey, Little-Siebold documents the struggle to define ethnic identities in Guatemala following the October Revolution. In 1954, a group of campesinos from Quezaltepeque led their cattle to the town center to protest land tenure issues. Empowered by Árbenz's land reforms, they sought to negotiate rights to the town's communal land, which had been controlled by a select group of wealthy and influential residents. Later, growing tensions between newly formed political parties and community organizations resulted in a stone-throwing fight during a local Saint's Day celebration. Participants in the celebration argued over their differing political affiliations during the event and, as Little-Siebold relates, "total chaos" ensued (Smith and Adams, 104). The tensions emergent at this time continued to shape community relations over time.

*After the Coup* offers a new perspective on the coup by presenting Maya interpretations of these important historic events. Its chapters uniquely argue that the ideologies of Árbenz's presidency were not universally embraced by the Maya but were the source of ongoing conflicts. Some chapters make this argument more effectively than others: at times, the volume seems disjointed and its chapters contradictory. While the volume presents a thorough analysis of the varied perspectives on the October Revolution and the Ten Years of Spring, the reader learns little about the people who lived through the fear and violence of the era.

In contrast, *A Beauty That Hurts* presents an ethnographic portrait of the people that author George Lovell met during his journalistic and academic careers in Guatemala. Lovell offers a powerful tale of "hardship and adversity," suffering and pain, and resilience and empowerment. Lovell's work is eloquently written and brings the lives of Guatemala's underrepresented peoples into focus.

*A Beauty That Hurts* begins with the tale of Genaro Castañeda, a Q'anjob'al Maya living in Canada. Genaro fled from Guatemala as a thirteen-year-old, after being forced to serve with a civil defense patrol unit. Fearing that he would be forced to turn against his community, Genaro left Guatemala in search of a better life in the United States and later, Canada. Genaro recalls, "I was told it was a free place, a place where there was no war, a place where you could work and study in peace" (Lovell, 13). Through Genaro's story, the reader learns about the

marginalization, fear, and powerlessness that the Maya faced in Guatemala during the civil war.

Stories of other Guatemalans further highlight the fight to overcome adversity. The story of Jakaltek Maya scholar Victor Montejo recounts the brutality of Ríos Montt's presidency. The Guatemalan army arrested Montejo in 1982 after they attacked the village where he worked as a teacher. After being released with the expectation that he would become an informant, Montejo fled to the United States. Montejo sought a way to stay connected to those who remained behind. Now a scholar of the Jakaltek people, Montejo has returned to Guatemala to use his experience and a new political position to fight for indigenous rights.

Lovell also addresses the controversy surrounding Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú. Following the violent deaths of several family members, Menchú fled to Mexico and later recounted her life story to an anthropologist, Elizabeth Burgos-Debray.<sup>5</sup> Rigoberta Menchú became the subject of controversy after David Stoll's *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* disputed the accuracy of the events that she reported in her life story and discredited her testimony.<sup>6</sup> Stoll argued that Menchú embellished many of the events included in her testimony for personal and political gain. Her story, he suggested, presents an inaccurate picture of life during the Guatemalan Civil War. His critique of Menchú's story incited an international controversy debating the nature of testimony and truth.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to Stoll, Lovell argues that what matters is not that the events Menchú details happened to her, but that they happened at all. Lovell writes, "As a text, one that has been read in translation in over a dozen languages, Menchú's testimony has reached a global audience and has had an immense impact in drawing international attention to the atrocities committed against Maya peoples in Guatemala" (24).

*A Beauty That Hurts* also presents the stories of Guatemalans living in the country today. Among these accounts, the story of Doña Magdalena is most memorable. Magdalena suffered great losses when her husband and son were abducted by the army in the early 1980s. Later, Magdalena fought for the exhumation of the mass graves of war victims and the repatriation of remains. After the signing of the Peace Accords, Lovell returned to San José to present Magdalena with a copy of his book, which featured her story and photograph. The old woman cried when she saw her picture. When Lovell asked her why she was crying, her grandson explained that her photograph was above a picture of Rigoberta Menchú. He elaborated, "She says she won't be as famous as Rigoberta Menchú . . . but people will see them in the book and know they shared the same experiences" (37). For Magdalena, sharing her story with an international audience gave her the justice that had otherwise eluded her.

Lovell skillfully weaves excerpts from news reports he collected during this

5. Elizabeth Burgos-Debray, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (New York: Verso, 1984).

6. David Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998).

7. See Arturo Arias, *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

time into his lived experiences. While murder, torture, and kidnapping dominated the headlines, few people expressed interest in knowing about the reported events. In "The Daily News (1990)," Lovell recalls his conversation with a Guatemalan waitress. When the waitress asks Lovell if he ever tires of reading the news, he replies that he likes to be informed. She responds, "Nobody I know reads the newspapers as much as you do. . . . They find them too upsetting. Besides, they don't have the time" (81). Lovell suggests that the waitress's ambivalence stems from the fact that few crimes were brought to justice. While stories of horrific acts were widely reported, few were investigated, since the perpetrators often acted on behalf of the government.

In 1982, editorials in Guatemalan national newspapers criticized the increasing waves of violence ordered by President Ríos Montt. Though Ríos Montt espoused a platform of change and honesty, he ordered the execution of those that opposed him as part of his counterinsurgency plan. Lovell also documents Guatemalans' disillusionment with the political process and failed promises of peace in the late 1980s and 1990s. The chapter "Scarred by War" suggests that although peace was on the horizon for Guatemala in the early 1990s, the legacy of the atrocities committed during the war continued to shape the country's future. "Talking about peace may be the closest Guatemala ever gets to it," he concludes (98). For Lovell, continuing political instability, corruption, and ethnic discrimination have prevented Guatemala from achieving peace, even in the absence of war.

Lovell's narrative approach and his integration of news reports with personal experience connect the reader to the people, places, and events that shaped life in Guatemala during the civil war. This updated edition of *A Beauty That Hurts* addresses the country's recent political developments. Though the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996 ended some of the fear and violence of the civil war era, many challenges lay ahead for Guatemala. Lovell concludes that "Guatemala . . . is *not* a poor country. . . . Guatemala has been made a poor country because the allotment of its resources, especially its land resources, has been deformed by crippling geographies of inequality" (180). While Lovell brings the reader up to date on the fight to bring Ríos Montt and others to justice, missing is a critical discussion of the role of cultural activism in contemporary Guatemalan society.

Betsy Konefal's *For Every Indio Who Falls* presents a detailed history of Maya cultural activism in Guatemala. The book's introduction begins with an interesting hook that sets the stage for Konefal's discussion of ethnic conflict: the story of indigenous folkloric pageant queens who used their public roles to bring the ongoing ethnocide to the country's attention. In 1978, the army killed dozens of protesters in Panzós following a land dispute. This massacre was, as Konefal states, "a pivotal moment in the war" since it was the first of many public attacks against Maya communities (2). During the national folkloric pageant later that year, participants protested the massacre and their government, which celebrated its Maya heritage even as it carried out violent attacks against Maya communities.

The regional pageant queens' protest occurred as Guatemala was preparing for its annual national folkloric pageant, Rabin Ajau, which was slated to elect a queen to serve as an authentic representative of Guatemala's Maya. While pageants began at the community level in the 1930s, the government established the National

Folkloric Festival in 1971 to preserve Maya culture. The pageants were highly controversial, as activists argued that folkloric pageants exploited Maya culture, portraying Maya life as static and unchanging. “While folkloristas praised and judged Rabin Ajau contestants for their maternal language fluency, Mayas were prevented from using indigenous languages in schools, in the workplace, even in church,” Konefal notes (100).

Following the Panzós massacre, the indigenous queens organized a boycott of the festival. Konefal writes, “As the queens and their supporters expressed in the declaration, the state’s celebration of Maya ‘authenticity’ a mere two months after the killings of indigenous campesinos reeked of hypocrisy” (106). The government response to their protest stated, however, that those killed in Panzós were not “genuine” Maya, but brainwashed guerrillas (86). Since the festival was run by military personnel during the 1980s, 1978 was the last year in which Maya activism was tied to the National Folkloric Festival.

The Maya activist movement was born in the 1950s when Catholic Action provided a forum for politically minded catechists to learn about their rights, study social inequalities, and lead the fight for justice. Though Konefal uses her original interviews as evidence, her argument enhances the contributions of a wide body of literature, including Rigoberta Menchú’s narrative and works by Bruce Calder, Abigail Adams, and Beatriz Manz that explore the role of the Catholic Church in organizing and mobilizing indigenous movements in Guatemala.<sup>8</sup>

As Maya activism grew during the 1970s, Konefal states based on her original interviews conducted with numerous Guatemalans, it divided into two conflicting factions: groups fighting ethnic discrimination and those concerned with class-related struggles, a point that has also been explored by others.<sup>9</sup> Though the groups shared a similar goal—to fight inequality—they had vastly different approaches. While the *clasista* movement fought to end class-based inequalities, the *culturalista* movement sought to redefine Maya identity. A leader of the *culturalista* movement, Antonio Pop Caal, published what Konefal deems “scathing” critiques of Guatemala’s Ladinos and argued against Ladino authority over the country’s indigenous population (61). Ladinos perpetuated inequalities against the Maya because they lacked a clear sense of their own identities. The *culturalista* focus on reclaiming Maya identity virtually excluded Ladino participation. In contrast, the *clasista* movement, inspired by the work of Severo Martínez Pe-

8. Burgos-Debray, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, 80–86; Bruce J. Calder, “Interwoven Histories: The Catholic Church and the Maya, 1940 to the Present,” in *Resurgent Voices in Latin America: Indigenous Peoples, Political Mobilization, and Religious Change*, ed. Edward L. Cleary and Timothy J. Steigenga (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 93–124; Abigail E. Adams, “Reviving Our Spirits: Revelation, *Re-encuentro*, and *Retroceso* in Post-Peace Accords Verapaz,” in *Mayas in Postwar Guatemala: Harvest of Violence Revisited*, ed. Walter E. Little and Timothy J. Smith (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 30–41; Beatriz Manz, *Paradise in Ashes: A Guatemalan Journey of Courage, Terror, and Hope* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

9. John A. Peeler, “Social Justice and the New Indigenous Politics: An Analysis of Guatemala, the Central Andes, and Chiapas,” in *What Justice? Whose Justice? Fighting for Fairness in Latin America*, ed. Susan Eva Eckstein and Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley (Berkeley: University of California Press), 271–273, 277.



lález and Marxist theory, argued that class struggles were the root of oppression.<sup>10</sup> This group believed that ending class inequalities would help to eliminate ethnic discrimination. The clasista movement argued that “focusing on differences between Mayas and Ladinos was, in fact, counterrevolutionary, since it would undermine a unity of the oppressed that was crucial to a successful revolution” (Konefal, 56). The differing perspectives of each movement caused a rift between them, until Guatemala’s 1976 earthquake, which killed 26,000 people, united activists for a common cause. Shortly after the earthquake, the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) became a unified movement against endemic poverty and oppression. Though some culturalista activists rejected this revolutionary movement, others “countered that only as a single nation could they defeat the state and create a new nation” (Konefal, 73).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the CUC and other revolutionary groups continued their fight to end poverty and for the rights of all Guatemalans. During the heightened violence of the 1980s, the CUC called for all Maya to join them in their battle for equality and to end oppression. The early 1980s saw the formation of new revolutionary groups like the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) and the Revolutionary Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), and smaller, Maya-led groups focused on ending ethnic oppression. In the early 1990s, “Mayanistas” fought for “culturally oriented demands,” such as rights to use indigenous dress and speak indigenous languages (Konefal, 168). When the process of negotiating peace began in 1994, activists from conflicting groups united to fight for indigenous rights. Konefal argues, however, that while they achieved a consensus on a draft of an Indigenous Rights Accord in the early 1990s, it generated little public support since their conflicting agendas led some Maya activists to oppose the referendum. Referencing the work of Kay Warren,<sup>11</sup> Konefal states: “The defeat of the Indigenous Rights referendum in 1999 can be explained in part by logistical problems and widespread political disillusionment. It is difficult not to conclude, however, that the limited rights the measure contained—mostly cultural issues championed by the Mayanistas—were not enough to win the solid support of more activist Mayas or get a majority to the polls” (174–175).

Though the Pan-Mayan movement has succeeded in creating space for indigenous voices to be heard and considered in Guatemala, tensions and conflicts within and beyond the community of Maya activists have in some ways impeded the movement from making strides toward the peace and equality for which it fights. Konefal concludes that while “Guatemala in the twenty-first century no longer seems an ‘eternal Panzós,’ problems facing the pueblo Maya remain formidable” (178).

*For Every Indio Who Falls* offers the reader a comprehensive look at the origins of Maya activism in Guatemala and contextualizes the people, places, ideologies,

10. Severo Martínez Peláez, *La patria del criollo* (Guatemala City: Editorial Universitaria, 1970).

11. Kay B. Warren, “Voting against Indigenous Rights in Guatemala: Lessons from the 1999 Referendum,” in *Indigenous Movements, Self-Representation, and the State in Latin America*, ed. Kay B. Warren and Jean E. Jackson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 149–180.

and organizations that shaped the Pan-Mayan movement within Guatemala's brutal history. The book is well documented, using newspaper articles and other records to provide a solid background on each movement. Konefal's account of the Pan-Mayan movement ends with the signing of the Peace Accords in 1996 and does not explore the growth or accomplishments of the Pan-Mayan movement during the last seventeen years.

*The Mayan in The Mall* takes a different approach to examining the impact of the civil war on Guatemalan culture and society. J. T. Way explores the development strategies used to modernize Guatemala and national attitudes toward the Maya. The book begins by examining how Guatemala has used stereotypical views of the Maya to define its national image. Way explains that "over the course of the twentieth century, imagined Maya came to occupy a discursive space in which their ancient civilization was linked with modernism and progress and their contemporary society was equated with backwardness" (33). While the "folkloric" appeal of the ancient Maya drew tourists to Guatemala, national ethnic politics alienated the contemporary Maya from their history and excluded them from participating in the country's economic development.

In the early 1900s, as the Ubico regime worked to develop Guatemala's agro-export business, it deemed Maya cultural tradition as an impediment to modern development. Ubico imposed vagrancy laws that required poor farmers, largely Maya, to perform forced labor for plantation owners or on public works projects. During his thirteen-year rule, he permitted significant foreign investment in Guatemala, displacing farmers from their land. Way argues that "the Ubico state mobilized modernist discourses and fascist forms of corporate socio-political organization while promoting a racist lord and peon economy" (37). Ubico's politics increased ethnic and class-based inequalities.

*The Mayan in the Mall* examines several case studies of largely unsuccessful Guatemalan economic development projects. Most striking among these is the story of El Gallito, one of Guatemala City's most dangerous neighborhoods. El Gallito was a vacant property until the 1920s, when the government divvied it up to give to poor families in a land lottery. Land recipients were required to build "solid dwellings" without government assistance, lacking services like electricity, plumbing, or waste disposal (Way, 46–47). The government sought to modernize the city and build a new middle-class neighborhood through these means. In 1946, however, the government became dissatisfied with the standard of living in El Gallito and residents were informed that they would be moved out of the neighborhood and their homes would be leveled to make room for new apartment complexes. Once the construction was complete, they could return as renters in the new buildings. This plan became the source of great controversy, and although it was rejected, the tensions it caused impacted El Gallito's further development. This story shows the reader how class-based discrimination informed development projects in the twentieth century.

Way also explores the economic impact of the construction of the Pan-American Highway, of Guatemala City's La Terminal market, and the El Trébol cloverleaf. While the government undertook each project to modernize the country and facilitate capitalist development, none was successful, he concludes. The projects



required the significant investment of resources and yielded little return. Though the Pan-American Highway facilitated transportation, Way uses archival materials to argue that few Guatemalans benefited from the ability to travel by highway. While the construction of El Trébol, which connected the Pan-American Highway to the Atlantic Highway, was intended to open “economic frontiers,” it simply resulted in more problems for Guatemala City’s residents (Way, 105). La Terminal market was designed to serve as the country’s center of commercial agriculture, but by the 1960s it had become a center of illicit activity, while the area surrounding the market was increasingly violent. The poor became the scapegoats for these projects’ failures. Way uses Guatemalan news articles, government reports, and archival records to support his points, though some of his arguments remain unconvincing. Although he includes the personal experiences of several Guatemalans in his discussion, his analysis could be significantly enhanced by incorporating more firsthand accounts of these projects by those who lived through them.

*The Mayan in the Mall* also makes a critical connection between development strategies, modernization, and genocide. During the war, Way states, the resources needed to fully develop Guatemala’s economic and educational systems were used to support counterinsurgency efforts instead. Way argues that the generals that governed Guatemala during the civil war were successful in developing the country’s commercial agriculture. This development came with a price, however: “This epoch of intense modernization in Guatemala culminated in genocide. The period from 1970 to 1985 was one of transformation through terror” (125). Following the 1976 earthquake, the military led relief efforts and managed aid through the National Reconstruction Committee (CRN). While this agency sought to bring relief to earthquake victims, it became a way for the military to control the country’s access to resources.

Though the end of the country’s civil war and state-sponsored violence offered Guatemalans the promise of further economic development, progress was slow during the transition to peace. In his final chapter, Way critically examines how *maquilas*, evangelical Christianity, the Pan-Mayan movement, urbanization, and increasing levels of crime have shaped Guatemala’s recent economic development. Missing from Way’s book, however, is a critical discussion of the growing power of drug cartels and their impact on Guatemala’s economy. He convincingly concludes that long-standing social barriers, like discrimination and alienation, impede the economic participation of indigenous Guatemalans, leading to the continued fragmentation of Guatemalan society, another impediment in the path toward peace in the country. Way argues, “The result of Guatemala’s development, beyond ever-escalating poverty, has been a widespread fragmentation.” He elaborates, “Fragmentation plays a major role in making Guatemala feel and function like a shattered place, a nation both broken and lost” (182). Nevertheless, while Way posits that ideologies of race shaped Guatemala’s economic progress, he does not explore the connections between race, ethnicity, and economic development, outside of the book’s first chapter. Rather, Way relates the failure of the projects he details to class-based discrimination and the marginalization of the country’s poor. One is left to wonder how Guatemala’s “indigenous problem” and national views of race have shaped its economic development.

These works give us new insights into the historical events that preceded Guatemala's 1954 coup and twentieth-century Guatemalan ideologies of race and ethnicity, while bringing the reader closer to understanding how the civil war forever transformed Guatemalan culture and society. They remind us that while the civil war ended more than fifteen years ago, the inequalities and instability it created continue to define life in Guatemala today. Peace has eluded Guatemala, these books show, in part because national attitudes that stigmatize Maya culture as "antimodern" and an obstacle to progress have not changed. Those enduring attitudes are primary causes of decades of violence and centuries of inequality. As Lovell writes in *A Beauty That Hurts*, "How, I ask myself, can a 'new struggle' be avoided if the root causes of the civil war are talked about, year after year, administration after administration, only to be addressed in theory, not in practice?" (98). For Guatemala to achieve peace, it must confront its past and change national attitudes toward the Maya. While the trial of Guatemala's former president Ríos Montt offered the country the possibility for one such change, the reversal of his conviction perpetuated the liminal status of the Maya and presented yet another obstacle in their fight for justice and equality. The court's decision to postpone Ríos Montt's retrial left the future uncertain not only for the former dictator but for all Guatemalans.