genocide of peoples in terms of the perpetrators' view as a venue for "new opportunities" cannot be recommended to any anthropological readers.

Silence on the Mountain: Stories of Terror, Betrayal, and Forgetting in Guatemala. Daniel Wilkinson. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002. 371 pp.

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By the time Daniel Wilkinson arrived in Guatemala, a young U.S. citizen fresh out of college, the country had been the scene of atrocities dating back to the Spanish conquest in the early 16th century. Most of the Guatemalans he encountered in the 1990s, especially in rural areas, lived fraught and haunted lives. In order to understand the origins of what Linda Green (1999) aptly calls "fear as a way of life," Wilkinson set out to explore Guatemala's violent and traumatic past. *Silence on the Mountain* is the impressive result: an engaging mix of memoir, travelogue, archival sleuthing, historical analysis, insightful observation, and sheer good writing.

Wilkinson chooses not to concern himself with colonial roots and, instead, constructs, in the literary mode of creative nonfiction, a compelling narrative that anchors Guatemala's woes (and the woes of Guatemalans) in the events and circumstances of three defining episodes: first, the Liberal Reforms of the late 19th century, during which a nation-building project transformed precapitalist Guatemala into a coffee republic; second, the CIA-orchestrated overthrow in 1954 of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, whose democratically elected government sought to make Guatemala's land and resources more evenly distributed, rather than controlled and enjoyed by a privileged few; and, third, a bloody civil war that, beginning in 1961, lasted 36 years and took the lives of an estimated two hundred and fifty thousand people—83.33 percent of whom (according to the findings of a UN Truth Commission) were Maya Indians, massacred in the name of anticommunism in orchestrated acts of genocide.

It is in the last grisly episode that Wilkinson directly locates the trauma of many of the people he interviews. His vivid recounting of what survivors told him, even by the grim standards of Guatemala, is sickening. He threads disclosures skillfully together, bit by bit, to harrowing effect. Here is how Indian residents assembled at a town meeting in Sacuchúm finally raised their voices to break the silence of the mountain:

> The man in the corner spoke: "They gathered us into the plaza in front of the church. And there a captain spoke to us from the belfry. 'Today you will be punished,' he told us. 'It's known that you are bad, that the guerrilla has been here, that it's here because it's fed by you. It wouldn't be here if it weren't for your support.' And he said, 'Fish only live where there is water. You here are the water. When the pond dries up, the fish dies. We're going to take care of you, so that the fish will die.'" [p. 210]

Forty-four people were subsequently found murdered, in barbarous ways we can only imagine, for "no bullets had been fired." One woman informs Wilkinson: "They cut out their tongues" (p. 211). Of all the details divulged in the catharsis of telling, Wilkinson confesses he found "none so horrifying" as this revelation. Someone else tells him "The newspapers and radio said that the dead were all guerrillas who had died in combat." He asks: "Were you ever able to tell the true story?" His informants reply: "This is the first time" (p. 212).

Wilkinson tells the stories of what happened in recent decades at Sacuchúm, at Cajolá, at La Igualdad, at La Patria, and elsewhere in Guatemala in a moving and sympathetic manner. His work is the result of patient listening on his part, after he had gained local confidence and ventured to some very remote corners of Guatemala. He does an especially evocative job of reconstructing the insecurity and isolation that charge life on the coffee plantations of San Marcos, culling information from property owners as well as from farm workers. Wilkinson takes pains to seek out, and hear out, the perspectives of entrenched adversaries, be they former guerrilla leaders or a retired minister of defense. He is careful to register nuance, complexity, and contradiction. His dogged persistence in tracking down evidence, finding it recorded on paper or having it corroborated in an interview, pays off handsomely.

Anyone who knows little or nothing about Guatemala can pick up *Silence on the Mountain* and be reliably filled in. Students of anthropology will appreciate its textual accessibility. Specialists, too, should not be disappointed and will surely admire the commitment and dedication that went into the book's composition.

REFERENCES CITED

Green, Linda
1999 Fear as a Way of Life: Mayan Widows in Rural Guatemala. New York: Columbia University Press.