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The Forbidden Story: A Look at Manlio Argueta’s *One Day of Life* Through the Lens of James C. Scott’s “Behind the Official Story”

James C. Scott, Director of the Program in Agrarian Studies at Yale University and Sterling Professor of Political Science and Anthropology, investigates the ways that people survive under oppressive regimes and, in a time of rising governmental power, the ways in which resistance is possible. Scott’s insights into domination and resistance help focus a discussion of the power negotiations within Manlio Argueta’s novel, *One Day of Life*. Argueta writes a multifaceted representation of the El Salvadorian conflict of the 1970s, wherein a group of peasant laborers struggle to organize socialist cooperatives and demand better pay and fairer loan practices, only to meet the crushing brutality of local authorities trained by the U.S. to stamp out “Communist” uprisings. Interestingly, Argueta focalizes his readers through the perspectives of both the subordinate peasant women struggling for survival and the National Guardsmen who oppress and terrorize them. Seen through the lens of Scott’s theory of public and hidden transcripts, Argueta’s diverse testimonies offer us a privileged and subversive view behind the public masks of these power negotiations on the El Salvadorian stage. In this essay, I examine the many ways in which James C. Scott’s theories help reveal Argueta’s novel as a clever backlash to the U.S.’s war by CIA-trained proxy in El Salvador. I also explore how Argueta aims not only to broadcast the previously stifled voices unheard in the “official” (read carefully hidden) story of El Salvador but also, like Scott, to invite “his readers to consider the possibility that reading itself might be a form of resistance.”