

homosexual in prison. Crucially, the FLH confronted the Cuban Revolution, sacred cow of the Latin American Left, for its repression against homosexuals. Scholars have worked on the gendered dynamics of Cuban revolutionary icons. Recently, Michelle Chase has shown in *Revolution within the Revolution* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015) how the male images of Castro and his bearded comrades prevented more radical, queer leaderships emerging from the underground of the early revolutionary years in the island. The FLH confronted all those who condoned the Cubans' homophobic export of social control, from the Black Panthers in the US to the armed Left in Latin America: not because the Black Panthers consented to subordinate homosexual rights to socialist goals, but because in doing so they preserved the same foundations of capitalist exploitation that they aimed to destroy.

For Simonetto, time proved this essentialist approach misleading: 'Homosexuality can live alongside systems of capitalist production.' The proliferation of gayness as a niche market, the bland discourses dissociating sexuality from power relations at large seem to give credit to his idea. But as the author also said, paraphrasing Walter Benjamin in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 'the role of revolutionary utopia is to illuminate the areas of that which needs to be destroyed'. And in that, the FLH proved persistently effective. By 2010, gay rights organisations were again united with Peronist supporters in the plazas of downtown Buenos Aires, celebrating the approval of the Marriage Equality and Gender Identity laws. The laws still are some of the most progressive in the region, promoted and/or tolerated by some of the same Peronist powerbrokers who had dismissed sexual diversity in the streets less than four decades earlier. Victory had never tasted sweeter.

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ERNESTO SEMÁN

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Verónica Ada Abrego, *Erinnerung und Intersektionalität. Frauen als Opfer der argentinischen Staatsrepression (1975–1983)* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2016), pp. 554, €49.99, pb

This important study contributes to the rising visibility of gender-specific violence within state terrorist practices, which in the past and present have been suppressed by power arrangements and cultural notions that conceive sexual violence as a private, shameful experience to be hidden. Abrego's published dissertation in Romance Studies examines discourses around female victims of state terror in Argentina, encompassed by the last year of Isabel Perón's government and the following military regime (1976–83). Combining *memoria* and 'intersectionality', the author seeks to understand both the literary memory, exemplified by the writings of four female authors, and societal discourses about state terror within their deeper cultural contexts. Abrego argues that the notion of intersectionality is of particular relevance for a thorough analysis of the ways in which socio-political processes are moulded by systematic violence. She wants to detect the various but interwoven effects of several axes of 'discrimination' in Argentina on the bodies and souls of *desaparecidas*, on the female literary memory of experiences of state terror, and finally on societal ways of dealing with the past. For her, female literary production indicates both a moment of 'writing back', i.e. of fighting against societal tendencies to deliberately forget state terror (pp. 387–9), and 'an act of self-affirmation' (p. 394).

The book comprises four parts. The first part (pp. 27–93) discusses the two key concepts of the study: intersectionality and, following Carlo Ginzburg and Sybille Krämer,

'*die Spur*', the trace as an analytic device of memory studies. Part 2, 'Nation and the Subjects/Bodies of Rebellion' (pp. 95–212), sums up discursive conjunctions in Argentina in order to highlight 'the discursive and historico-cultural preconditions for the persecution of rebellious women' (p. 211). Here, Abrego addresses different topics such as the Cold War and national security, Peronist discourse, social unrest in the 1960s, discourses of the Juntas and Human Rights Organisations on the *desaparecidos/as*, practices of violence in the detention camps, and the *Campana del Desierto* (1878–80). Part 3, 'State Repression and Discursive Change' (pp. 215–369), centres on the changing understandings of the dictatorship. The once prevailing concept of a 'Dirty War' (*guerra sucia*) of the military and elite was gradually replaced by the idea of 'genocide', an interpretive pattern that today would be hegemonic as a sign of an achieved consensus on the question of Human Rights. The final part, 'A Literature of *Desapariciones Forzadas* Written by Women' (pp. 371–481), discusses four texts describing the experiences of disappearance, torture, sexual violence and life after survival. Two texts are biographical – Pilar Calveiro's *Poder y desaparición* (1998) and Graciela Fainstein's *Detrás de los ojos* (2006) – while the other two are introduced as fiction: Manuela Fingueret's *Hija del silencio* (1999) and María Teresa Andruetto's *La mujer en cuestión* (2003).

Abrego shows in a remarkable way how the idea of genocide gained momentum in Argentina although its local usage differs from international law since 'political groups' are left out of the defining parameters of victims of genocide. Abrego has produced an excellent achievement in her meticulous demonstration of the aftermath of systematic violence, betraying the misleading implications of a 'post-conflict society' that obscures continuing societal conflicts and personal experiences of violence by a supposed dividing line in terms of political organisation. The last part in particular provides evidence of the devastating impact of state terror on subjectivities and socio-ethical values, and on the necessity of societal recognition for victims and their agency in dealing with irreversible injuries. Abrego develops the idea that memory writing enables the survivor 'to forgive oneself for the meaningless suffering and to console oneself' (p. 429). The integration of suffering in one's life by writing is empowering (p. 404). The author has collated a huge amount of data within and across diverse topical constellations that makes the reading of the book very informative and in many instances compelling.

However, as the sketch of the book's structure might have indicated, Abrego's work is somewhat overloaded and might even be considered incoherent, not least because of its occasionally convoluted style. The author dedicates more than 40 pages to '*die Spur*' but takes it up only rarely and then more like a metaphor than an analytical concept (pp. 165, 189). The relevance and analytical benefit of the other key concept, intersectionality, remains unclear as well, not only because it first recurs on page 254. Abrego uses the term mostly to state that something *is* intersectional, for instance when she describes that Andruetto's protagonist was still called a 'communist bitch' (p. 476). Referring to expressions of plural identity elements, notably gender but also political and, to a much lesser extent, religious affiliations, this notion becomes a linguistic litmus test denoting that in a given speech act at least two 'axes of difference' are present. Furthermore, Abrego addresses almost exclusively female gender identity, which is only a fraction of gender, neglecting not only class, age, race etc. but also intra-differences within each sub-/category. What, then, about the claim that intersectionality unites analytically separated areas of discrimination? A rather old-fashioned dichotomous simplification of gender relations is finally displayed by Abrego's

occasional mentioning of a ‘*Patriarchat*’ (pp. 436, 487). Such a homogenisation is misleading, evoking Henrietta Moore’s suggestion that ‘The difficult thing to explain is not why gender relations are so violent, but why violence is so gendered, so sexualized’ (‘The Problem of Explaining Violence in the Social Sciences’, in Penelope Harvey and Peter Gow (eds.), *Sex and Violence. Issues in Representation and Experience* (Routledge, 1994), pp. 138–55).

It is also problematic to render female victims of state terror as ‘rebellious women’ or ‘politically engaged women’ (pp. 24, 9), reiterating unintentionally the military discourse. Of course, many of the *desaparecidas* were ‘rebellious’ and leftist activists, but what about those abducted at random – discernible in Abrego’s own affirmation of ‘an increasingly arbitrary selection of victims’ (p. 293) – and the irrational side of state terror which does not need any personal attribute? The author is right in pointing out that the relatives of *desaparecidos/as* engaged in their depoliticisation, in a reaction to international Human Rights NGOs and the dehumanising image of *subversivos* (pp. 270–1, 310). Yet, does that conversely mean that all female victims were rebellious, politically active etc., particularly if state terror also requires contingency to spread as far and deep as possible?

Finally, it is strange that only 20 per cent of the text is dedicated to female writings about state terror which, in addition to societal discourses, is the supposed subject of the book. Despite an extensive bibliography of more than 50 pages, relevant local and foreign anthropological work on Argentina, memory, representation and violence is almost entirely lacking, while unnecessary references to a great many intellectual icons – from Adorno, Agamben, Arendt (just to name the twentieth-century ones beginning with ‘A’) to Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza etc. – abound in frequent digressions.

But certain flaws aside, this book is a valuable contribution to Latin American studies. Abrego’s informative and critical work is of great interest and very useful for scholars working on Argentine society, the long-term effects of state terror and the intricacies of testimonial writing.

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Lucas Bilbao and Ariel Ledesma, *Profeta del genocidio: El Vicariato castrense y los diarios del obispo Bonamín en la última dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2016), pp. 495, pb

The history of military clergy and more broadly the role of the Catholic Church during the Argentine dictatorship (1976–83) has seen a remarkable revival, thanks both to recent political events and the availability of previously inaccessible sources. In 2007 Christian von Wernich, the former chaplain to the police force of Buenos Aires province, was convicted of crimes against humanity. In 2013 Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio became Pope Francis. His election to the papacy renewed a debate about his role in the kidnapping and tortures of the Jesuits Orlando Yorio and Franz Jalics. Serendipity and political changes also made available new archival material from the archdiocese of Buenos Aires, state security archives and the personal diary of the military Pro-Vicar Monsignor Victorio Bonamín here reviewed. This critical edition of his diaries from 1975 and 1976, saved from destruction on his explicit order, is ‘prefaced’ by a compelling book-length study of the Military Vicariate.

The first part of the book is a monograph by the authors on the bishop and the Military Vicariate. This is introduced by a preface written by Horacio Verbitsky