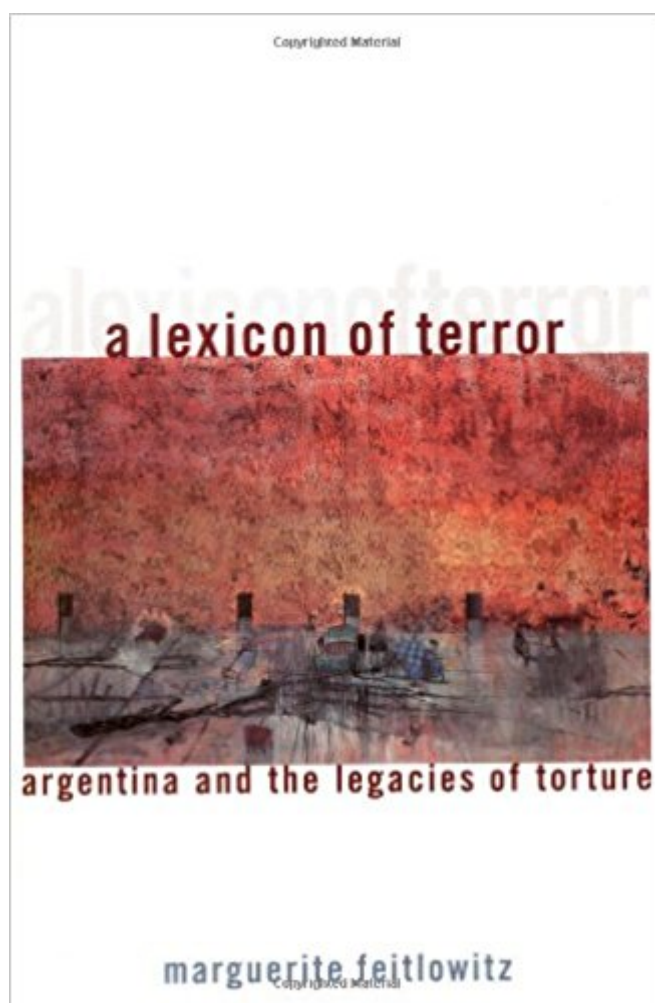


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# A Lexicon Of Terror: Argentina And The Legacies Of Torture (Oxford World's Classics)



## Synopsis

"We were all out in la charca, and there they were, coming over the ridge, a battalion ready for war, against a schoolhut full of children." Tanks roaring over farmlands, pregnant mothers tortured, their babies stolen and sold on the black market, homes raided in the dead of night, ordinary citizens kidnapped and never seen again--such were the horrors of Argentina's Dirty War. Now, in *A Lexicon of Terror*, Marguerite Feitlowitz fully exposes the nightmare of sadism, paranoia, and deception the military dictatorship unleashed on the Argentine people, a nightmare that would claim over 30,000 civilians from 1976 to 1983 and whose leaders were recently issued warrants by a Spanish court for the crime of genocide. Feitlowitz explores the perversion of language under state terrorism, both as it's used to conceal and confuse ("The Parliament must be disbanded to rejuvenate democracy") and to domesticate torture and murder. Thus, citizens kidnapped and held in secret concentration camps were "disappeared"; torture was referred to as "intensive therapy"; prisoners thrown alive from airplanes over the ocean were called "fish food." Based on six years of research and moving interviews with peasants, intellectuals, activists, and bystanders, *A Lexicon of Terror* examines the full impact of this catastrophic period from its inception to the present, in which former torturers, having been pardoned and released from prison, live side by side with those they tortured. Passionately written and impossible to put down, Feitlowitz shows us both the horror of the war and the heroism of those who resisted and survived--their courage, their endurance, their eloquent refusal to be dehumanized in the face of torments even Dante could not have imagined.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Argentina still struggles as a nation with the shame and horror of the so-called "dirty-war" of the decade following Juan Peron's death. During that horrific time, torture and kidnapping were the instruments of choice for the enforcement of political will. Feitlowitz unflinchingly examines life under sadistic military rule with detailed descriptions of the experiences of prisoners in concentration camps. The Argentinean vocabulary now includes words like *desaparecido* (disappeared person) and *chupado* (sucked up or kidnapped), vivid reminders of how commonplace kidnapping and murder became. Victims, often guilty only of nothing more than practicing psychology or journalism or being Jewish, have not been forgotten. Though Feitlowitz touches on the linguistic effects of government terrorism in Argentina, her book's greatest strength lies in the voice it gives the victims. The author spent years talking to survivors of the terror as well as some of the people responsible for instigating it. What *A Lexicon of Terror* does particularly well is capture the ongoing consequences of the dirty war--victims encountering their tormentors on the streets, Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo still marching to remind their government that the fates of thousands of disappeared are still not known, a government held hostage by the fear of army uprisings should any attempt to bring culprits to justice be made. Argentina is the subject of this particular Lexicon, but surely the citizens of other nations such as Chile, Guatemala, and El Salvador might see their own experiences mirrored here. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

During the past few years, many volumes have been written about the difficult period in Argentina's recent history called the "Dirty War." During that period of military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983, thousands of Argentineans were arrested, imprisoned, and declared missing or *desaparecidos* ("the disappeared"). Feitlowitz (writing, Harvard Univ.) approaches the subject in a unique and fascinating way by examining how language was used and changed because of what people experienced. The author interviewed hundreds of participants and tells her story through personal descriptions and examining language transformations. Consequently, the book provides an emotional and vivid description of events, uses new approaches, and suggests conclusions not found in other volumes on this period of Argentine history. An important book for college and academic Latin America collections. ?Mark L. Grover, Brigham Young Univ., Provo, UT Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Such a fascinating book. I highly recommend. We had to read it for my college Latin American studies class and I couldn't put it down. At the same time it is a very sad time in history.

I read this for my Human Rights class. A really important look into a horrible tragedy. It was easy to read, but still full of information. A lot of moving personal accounts

This is a compelling and relentless book that jumps off from the starting point that subtle Orwellian language manipulation is an essential component of political repression, by showing how the adjustment and subversion of words, the theft of meaning, enabled the Argentine Generals to torture, loot, and murder tens of thousands of quite innocent civilians (and unwanted military or anyone else in the way). In a literate society the body parts can remain hidden, and the words will do the work of subduing dissent. By exploring the personal stories and interviews with survivors, families of the 'disappeared,' willfully ignorant or complicit 'bystanders,' vain or conscience-stricken perpetrators, and so on, the book moves far beyond a linguistic or philosophical analysis. It is personal, angry, and tragic. What froze me to the bone is recognizing little linguistic echoes and hints from our own government as it moves the war on terror increasingly to a domestic front. One thing the author underplays, I think, is the extent to which a large proportion of the Argentine society actually was fine with the degree of brutality and repression, as long as they didn't have to actually see and 'know about' the mutilated carcasses of their neighbors' kids. They were convinced by words and the climate of paranoia that there was (indeed) an invisible war against terrorists going on all around them. 'Torture... is the secret weapon in the war without rules.' Not a stunningly brilliant work like Scarry's 'The Body in Pain,' but 'Lexicon of Terror' has the great advantage that it's very readable and accessible.

In her study of the Argentinan "Dirty War", Feitlowitz does a marvelous job of conveying the true sentiment on the subject from Argentines before, during and after the military coup of 1976. The terror, the hopelessness and today's heartwrenching despair. Her book recounts the testimony of families of the "desaparecidos" (disappeared) and victims themselves whom she interviewed during her six year research on the subject, in Argentina. She eloquently conveys to the reader the fear and confusion that have been long ingrained in the minds of Argentina's civilians, as the result of the atrocities committed by the dictatorship. As a teenager growing up in Argentina during this period, I attest to the veracity of the emotions delivered by the author in her writings. A must read on the

topic!

This book is an amazing read. Well written and well researched the personal testimonies given within its pages really help the reader comprehend what may seem inconceivable as well as display the author's commitment to quality research. Fantastic.

This is an incredibly researched work. Marguerite Feitlowitz has interviewed and probed into Argentina's past with an ear toward the language used and its effect upon the victims of the Dirty War. As a person who has studied and written about this time, I was fascinated to read her approach. The language used by the torturers of Argentina was sinister and telling; she has solved the puzzle of their words and let the world understand their aims and goals. It is a brilliant book, and important for anyone who is interested in 1) Human rights; 2) Latin American history; 3) Human nature; 4) The politics of a nation's memory.

If you love torture, then look no further than this book. It was the best torture book I ever read. I highly recommend this book to anyone who loves torture.

This book not only describes what happened in Argentina during the last dictatorship but shows what could happen anywhere when citizens resign their rights. It made me think about our participation on this inferno too.

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