

States Of Terror: Essays (Occasional Papers)

Begona Aretxaga



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States of Terror is the posthumous work by Begoña Aretxaga (1960–2002). As she wrote in its Introduction, her intellectual position was first of all "characterized by a displacement from militancy by academic writing and a displacement from academic writing by past militancy." Her ability for bringing to the situation at hand the experiences and sights of other times and places is at the root of her creativity. Aretxaga was interested in the cultural politics of state violence and the formation of political subjectivities. She was critically concerned with the multiple genealogies of violence. Aretxaga saw her own work as an experimental form of anthropology grounded in the experiences of ordinary people. In her view, experience is never raw but rather mediated in a complex variety of individual, social and ideological ways that need to be established ethnographically and historically. She sought to open alternative lines of research and poststructural theoretical engagement by drawing on post-colonial and Lacanian perspectives. Her own line of questioning was concerned with portraying moments of rupture that show how violence disrupts systems of interpretation and leads to the proliferation of discourses. At a personal level, Begoña's brilliance, common sense, and unassuming capacity for empathy and friendship touched the lives of many of her colleagues and students. This volume includes most of her published and a few unpublished essays. At the time of her death, she was trying to complete the book manuscript States of Terror for which six essays had already been published and three more were ready for publication. This volume gives some sense of unity to these scattered pieces.

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