



Title: *The Arts of Intimacy*

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## IN BRIEF

Michael Kerrigan

\*\*\*\*\* Superlative \*\*\*\* Super \*\*\* So-so  
\*\* Substandard \* Shoddy

### THE ARTS OF INTIMACY

BY JERRILYNN D DODDS,  
MARÍA ROSA MENOCA AND  
ABIGAIL KRASNER BALBALE  
(Yale, £25) ★★★★★

LIFE in a crucible is always liable to be hot and turbulent, and the Córdoba of the ninth century was no exception. That an essentially hybrid Hispanic culture took shape in the coexistence of Christians, Jews and Muslims in the Middle Ages has become historiographical orthodoxy, though it smacks inevitably of political correctness. Indeed, in setting out to reveal this medieval multiculturalism and with it the "lost memory of Castile", the authors of this ambitious study make no secret of their belief that we would do well to show greater religious and racial tolerance today. But, stunning presentation aside, what most impresses is the sense of a society that, far from being a big group hug, derived much of its energy from the often ill-tempered jostling between its groups.

### LIBERATION

BY WILLIAM HITCHCOCK  
(Faber, £25) ★★★★★

MANY of us grew up with the sense of the Second World War as a defining drama, a clash of good and evil grand enough to give meaning and moral purpose to a century's history. That belief has endured in spite of ever-accumulating evidence

that it was all a great deal more messy than the myth allows. Even the Liberation of 1945 was a mixed blessing for millions; this bracing – often seriously shocking – study shows. And not just those Germans in the path of the Red Army's juggernaut of rape and murder or those entire nations 'delivered' into Soviet servitude. Even in West Germany, the prospect of freedom and democracy failed to inspire all those who, like the young woman who spoke to one US reporter, were convinced "the Jews will come back and they will soak us again, like they did before '33".

### FIDEL AND CHE

BY SIMON REID HENRY  
(Sceptre, £20) ★★★★★

EVEN by megalomaniac standards, Castro comes across as an individualist (the world leader we're all on first-name terms with). As for Ernesto 'Che' Guevara: there is none like him; he stands alone in bearded, bereted iconhood. Historically, however, they were a double-act, their fortunes intertwined as closely as the friendship that, says Simon Reid-Henry, was with all its ups and downs the decisive influence on the lives of both. Though by no means uncritical, Reid-Henry's book tells us substantially the same old stirring story. It's innovative, though, in getting beyond the romance and the ideological dogma to take us to the heart of a remarkable relationship.