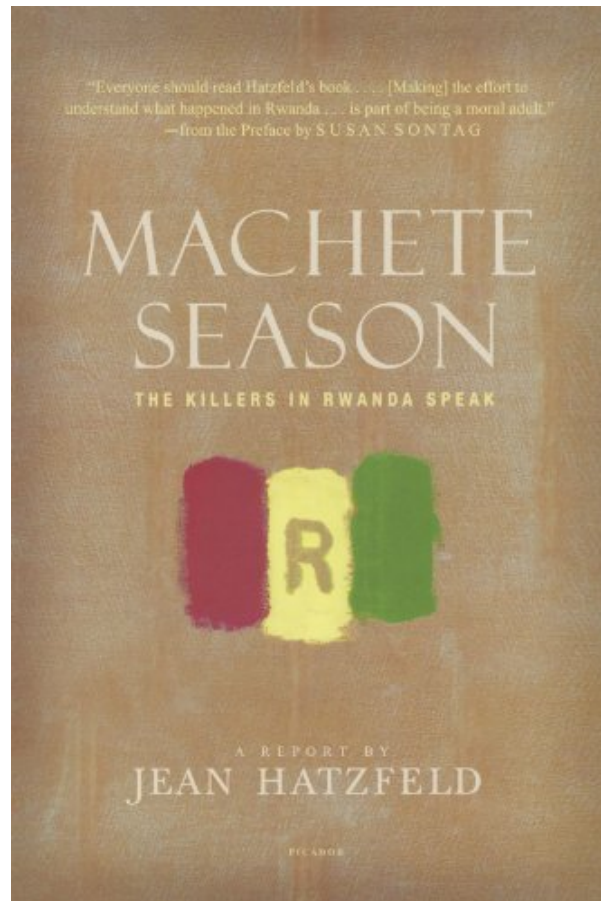


MACHETE SEASON: THE KILLERS IN RWANDA SPEAK BY JEAN HATZFELD



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"Everyone should read Hatzfeld's book. . . . [Making] the effort to understand what happened in Rwanda . . . is part of being a moral adult."
—from the Preface by SUSAN SONTAG

MACHETE SEASON

THE KILLERS IN RWANDA SPEAK



A REPORT BY
JEAN HATZFELD

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From Booklist

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Review

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During the spring of 1994, in a tiny country called Rwanda, some 800,000 people were hacked to death, one by one, by their neighbors in a gruesome civil war. Several years later, journalist Jean Hatzfeld traveled to Rwanda to interview ten participants in the killings, eliciting extraordinary testimony from these men about the genocide they perpetrated. As Susan Sontag wrote in the preface, *Machete Season* is a document that "everyone should read . . . [because making] the effort to understand what happened in Rwanda . . . is part of being a moral adult."

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Features

- Great product!

From Publishers Weekly

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"every one should read this book" (Sontag, in intro)

By M. Hron

This is simply an AMAZING -- yet horrifyingly stomach-churning --collection of testimonials by killers of Rwanda from the rural region of Nyamata. And like Sontag points out in her intro, "every one should read this book."

There have been innumerable books and documentaries of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda -- a highly controversial, long-obfuscated and often-misunderstood atrocity... However, very few of these accounts relate the actual perspectives or testimonials by ordinary Rwandans. Though several survivors have actually written testimonials of their experience, not one of them has yet been translated into English!!(eg. Yolande Makagasana's memoir in French), once again revealing the shameful Western ethnocentric attitude to this atrocity (Imagine for example if available accounts of Holocaust survivors had never been translated from German!) Hatzfeld's collection of testimonials therefore offers us a perspective that is completely lacking in the morass of publications about Rwanda, many of them written by journalists, academics or political attachees, who spent less than a month in the field in Rwanda... (And of course, who stayed at fancy White accomodations like the revamped Hotel Milles Collines during their visit...) It offers a crucial and critical intervention necessary for understanding the human impact of the genocide in Rwanda...

Moreover, in this collection Hatzfeld presents us with the perspective of the KILLERS during the genocide. Imagine if the Holocaust was recounted from the perspective of the Gestapo or concentration camp personnel! Simply RIVETING reading.

In the complementary reading "Into the Quick of Life," Hatzfeld offers us survivors' perspectives. Instead of focusing on great saviours (eg. Rusesabagina in Hotel Rwanda) it again concentrates on the perspective of ordinary people who survived incredible odds in the marshes.

My only misgiving about this set of books is that from a scholarly perspective, I would have wanted to hear more from or about the translator/translation from Kinyarwanda. And more about the actual collection of the testimonials, the ways the questions were asked, the interview sessions, the editing of testimonials etc.

I caution readers who may not be familiar with the genocide in Rwanda, that this book is not a textbook that will explain the events moment by moment or analyze the UN, US role etc. Rather it is a collection of perspectives by ordinary people, as speculative and subjective as individual povs usually are...

And extremely graphic and disturbing at that.

I disagree that the book is "confusing" because of its thematic approach. Genocide is not a linear experience, nor is a person's traumatic narration a blow-by-blow account. Instead, with his thematic approach, Hatzfeld offers some of the complexity, nuance and critical analysis of these testimonials.

I also disagree that these confessions seem specious, contrived or 'unreal.' This book is not CSI or Law and Order, where genocide and people's motives or memories as serial killers are collapsed into a 1 minute of logical explanation or confession... Rather this collection proffers various perspectives, half-truths, observations... in yes --the most candid, and yet also most harrowing descriptions of killing that I have ever read. As such is the most compelling account of the banality of inhumanity that I encountered.

As one survivor explains "The things that happened in Nyamata, in the churches, in the marshes, and on the hills, were the abnormal actions of perfectly normal people." (225)

If we were born in Rwanda, and were Hutu, these killers' stories could easily be our own...

It is crucial to remember the facts in the case of Rwanda -- the banality of genocide. Neighbors killed neighbors. On the streets. With machetes. 1/8th of the population of Rwanda was exterminated. Almost one million children were orphaned. As a result more than 120 000 were imprisoned for crimes of murder. In the Arusha TRC tribunal, only 26 have been convicted... Thus, since it has been ten years, 50 000 killers have since been released. Victims thus must live as neighbors with the killers of their families. All of these facts, again, affirm the crucial importance of this book -- which questions the possible future of ordinary Rwandans for generations to come...

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Yes it could happen here

By Amazon Customer

Required reading for all decent humans. It could happen here. It really could. Do not make the mistake of thinking these were savages and move on. These were thinking articulate men. Think of the men who line up to be led down a path of hatred and easy answers by Donald Trump. Then think about the fact that they have guns rather than machetes. Welcome to the jungle America.

3 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

By JUDITH A. CHIDESTER

Having lived in Rwanda for four years during the peaceful days, I am always interested in any writings on this. I have read Bob Gribbin's book about the period after the genocide and found it full of substance and

information. I find this book of interviews (double-spaced and in larger print) easy to read and interesting. I don't know how much the normal reader would glean of the mentality of the Rwandan people or their lives from this.

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