

Accounting for Horror



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The 1994 Rwandan genocide was a monumental atrocity in which at least 500,000 Tutsi and tens of thousands of Hutu were murdered in less than four months. Since 1994, members of the Rwandan political class who recognize those events as genocide have struggled to account for it and bring coherence to what is often perceived as irrational, primordial savagery.

Most people agree on the factors that contributed to the genocide -- colonialism, ethnicity, the struggle to control the state. However, many still disagree over the way these factors evolved, and the relationship between them. This continuing disagreement raises questions about how we come to understand historical events -- understandings that underpin the possibility of sustainable peace.

Drawing on extensive research among Rwandese in Rwanda and Europe, and on his work with a conflict resolution NGO in post-genocide Rwanda, Nigel Eltringham argues that conventional modes of historical representation are inadequate in a case like Rwanda. Single, absolutist narratives and representations of genocide actually reinforce the modes of thinking that fuelled the genocide in the first place. Eltringham maintains that if we are to understand the genocide, we must explore the relationship

between multiple explanations of what happened and interrogate how -- and why -- different groups within Rwandan society talk about the genocide in different ways.

作者介绍:

Nigel Eltringham received a first degree in History from St Andrews (1993), an MPhil in Development Studies from Cambridge (1995), and a PhD in Social Anthropology from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London (2001). He also taught at SOAS, where he held an ESRC postdoctoral research fellowship. Nigel joined the Anthropology Department in 2003.

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