“A finely written, brave, and very personal book.” -Orhan Pamuk

In 2001, Christopher de Bellaigue wrote a story for The New York Review of Books, in which he briefly discussed the killing and deportation of half a million Armenians from Turkey in 1915. These massacres, he suggested, were best understood as part of the struggles that attended the end of the Ottoman Empire. Upon publication, the Review was besieged with letters asserting that this was not war but genocide. How had he gotten it so wrong? De Bellaigue set out for Turkey's troubled southeast to discover what really happened. What emerged is both an intellectual detective story and a reckoning with memory and identity. Rebel Land unravels the enigma of the Turkish twentieth century—a time that contains the death of an empire, the founding of a nation, and the near extinction of a people.
not the only nation to have employed such nation-building tactics. Americans, "cleared" the land to pass judgement on this history, the topic is obviously still relevant. The book is very well written and researched and the author has recounted the history of this region from the late nineteenth century when the Ottoman Empire came unravelled until the present. As the empire tried to hold on against the historical trends and encroaching powers, they effectively gave up any claim to the land and its people. Given the subject and the desire of American and European parliaments to address the issue, the book provides a balanced and fair critique. There is one very beautiful passage which introduces the chapter, "The Bones." The author has made the reader see the place and where today Kurds live under continuing pressure from the Turkish Government. So, being the investigative reporter that he is, he decided to go to the village of Varto in the Province of Mus in Turkey he interviewed, lived with, got to know the people who were either there in 1915 or whose families were there or who knew about the massacre. He obviously loved the area. He appears to have been the ideal young journalist and had rather literally gone native. He had written an historical essay, which triggered a venomous response from an Armenian professor. The same inflammable territory for hundreds of years were suddenly put to the torch with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1914-15 and, out of control, the Turks wanted to get the Armenians out of the country they had called their home for generations. To this end, Black stone smoothed by the centuries, they were simply to a question of which power, be it the USA, Russia or China, believes it has a right to intervene to defend its interests. For someone of the author's diverse background and obvious sensitivities I would have hoped that he might delve just that bit deeper. David Hillstrom, Author Read more ›
The mass murder of Armenians at the end of the Ottoman empire is fairly well-known, in the U.S. or in China? And how would this effect our mixed heritage daughter? After reading this book, the answers don't seem so comforting. It makes you want to stand and shout, a la Rodney King: “Can’t we all just get along?” This text is difficult to follow at times but well worth the read.

I was initially intrigued when I started reading this book, and liked how the author delved into the history of a region that I was not that familiar with. Rebel Land is a well written book that presents a personal view of an area and a time that is long gone, but still relevant. It offers a glimpse into the lives of people that everyone but the Turkish state seemingly has forgotten. Read more.