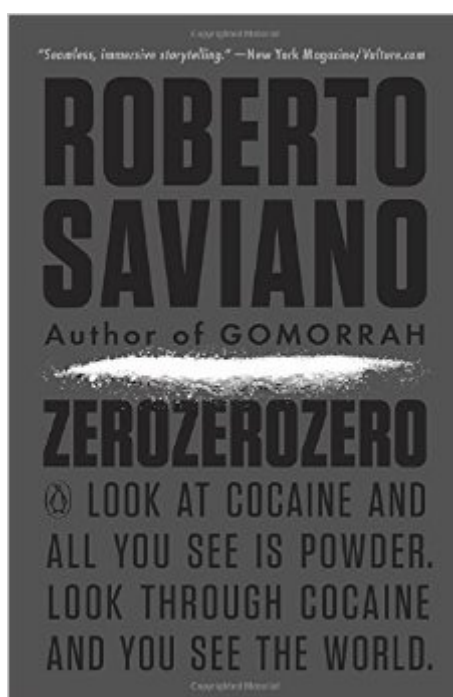


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ZeroZeroZero: Look At Cocaine And All You See Is Powder. Look Through Cocaine And You See The World. (Penguin History American Life)



Synopsis

An electrifying, internationally bestselling investigation of the global cocaine trade, from the author of the #1 international bestseller *Gomorra* — "Zero zero zero" — flour is the finest, whitest available. It is also the nickname among narco-traffickers for the purest cocaine on the market. And it is the title of Roberto Saviano's unforgettable exploration of the inner workings of the global cocaine trade — its rules and armies, and the true depth of its reach into the world economy. — Saviano's *Gomorra*, his explosive account of the Neapolitan mob, the Camorra, was a worldwide sensation. It struck such a nerve with the Camorra that Saviano has lived with twenty-four-hour police protection for more than eight years. During this time he has come to know law enforcement agencies and officials around the world. With their cooperation, Saviano has broadened his perspective to take in the entire global — "corporate" — entity that is the drug trade and the complex money-laundering operations that allow it to function, often with the help of the world's biggest banks. — The result is a harrowing and groundbreaking synthesis of literary narrative and geopolitical analysis exploring one of the most powerful dark forces in our economy. Saviano tracks the shift in the cocaine trade's axis of power, from Colombia to Mexico, and relates how the Latin American cartels and gangs have forged alliances with crime syndicates across the globe. He charts the increasing sophistication of these criminal entities as they diversify into other products and markets. He also reveals the astonishing increase in the severity of violence as they have fought to protect and extend their power. — Saviano is a writer and journalist of rare courage and a thinker of impressive intellectual depth, able to see connections between far-flung phenomena and bind them into a single epic story. Most drug-war narratives feel safely removed from our own lives; Saviano offers no such comfort. Both heart-racing and eye-opening, *ZeroZeroZero* is an investigative story like none other. — Praise for *ZerZeroZero*: — "[Saviano] has developed a literary style that switches from vivid descriptions of human depravity to a philosophical consideration of the meaning of violence in the modern world. . . . Most important of all is the hope Saviano gives to countless victims of criminal violence by standing up to its perpetrators." — "Financial Times

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Customer Reviews

According to the introduction by Saviano, at least one person the reader knows is using cocaine, if not the reader themselves. It seemed like an odd way to introduce the book - tangential, weird, and a little off-putting to this reader who doesn't know if anyone she knows uses cocaine. But as the reader delves into Saviano's stories...wow. There's the mafia crime boss who got recorded telling how the family works, and talking about the code of honor. There are the cartels with beaucoup bucks and power. It is so dramatic that it's hard at times to know if the stories are embellished or real. There's enough hint of truth that it could be completely honest...but, as a complete outsider to the drug world, some seem too striking to be completely honest. And there is a lot of description of very bloody killings and all the methods of killings. This reader could've done with some more left to the imagination. And it's focused primarily on the distribution of the drug, not the production of it, which seemed like an interesting choice. Without the production, all the money and power fizzles out. Living in a state that pioneered recreational marijuana use (along with Colorado), it was an interesting juxtaposition to read about the complicity of banks. When marijuana was legalized, some banks immediately said they wouldn't bankroll, finance, or hold accounts for marijuana based companies (producers, processors, or retailers) because it was a federal crime. In some cases, the still illegal cocaine business seems to have an easier time remaining in the banking world. In addition, cocaine has a huge effect on economies, which makes the puzzle of what to do about it even more complex. There are a lot of names that are dropped and the stories are relatively stand-alone.

The first 200 pages of this book are absolutely gripping. I finished them in one sitting, which for a curmudgeon of a reader like me is rare. The first section deals mostly with the Mexican drug cartels and their violent creation story and wars over turf. It's written mostly without the "I" voice and self

referential prose overdose that defines the rest of the book. As a result this first section is must-read material and the author puts on a clinic in how to write fantastic creative narrative non-fiction. As soon as the author moves to his native Italy, however, which was the subject of his previous book (making him a hunted man by the Italian mafia) the writing slips regularly into the perspective of the author, utilizing the "I" voice along with a very impressionistic and non-journalistic style of writing. This tends to take the reader out of the narrative head space of the story and into the sometimes adolescent meanderings of the author as he describes in an overly stylistic way how difficult his life has become now that he is being pursued by the Neapolitan mafia. As the remaining stories are woven together with an over-stylized abundance of prose they become difficult to follow and the rest of the book becomes tough sledding for the reader. I wish the author had forgone the references to his own battles with organized crime, and saved his first-person perspective for a later memoir instead of derailing the urgent, matter-of-fact narrative that defines the beginning of the book. I feel like a good editor would have stopped this project from mashing up its scope and losing focus over its central narrative.

Most people probably never stop and think about how pervasive illegal drugs have become in today's society. Probably not even if you're using them. And even people who acknowledge the fact that drugs are everywhere probably don't realize their brutal origins. We hear about the Mexican cartel violence almost daily, but it's hard to understand the severity--dare I say, the reality--of the situation unless you're directly affected by it. Hence why Roberto Saviano's ZERO ZERO ZERO is an important book. It is a detailed, unflinching account of the power of cocaine. From its humble--and disgusting--origins, to the violence it inflicts on the body and mind, to the horrific deeds people perpetrate to gain money from it. Saviano chronicles the rise and fall of various gangsters, most of whom you've probably never heard of, but who played an influential role in the chaos we see today. He also manages to sit down with lower level members, people who'll bare their souls due to arrogance, fear, or a fascinating combination of the two. This latter part is where the book really shines--when Saviano puts a face to the violence, lets inside the world as opposed to telling us about it. The only reason I gave this book 4 instead of 5 stars is because the narrative parts become increasingly convoluted. Saviano's prose is poetic; in fact, the introductory segments to each section are absolutely--and terrifyingly--beautiful. But quality prose can't hide an inundation of facts. Yes, it's informative; but it's hard to retain. The overall effect can be one of confusion and disorientation; but then again, that may be what Saviano is going for. Overall, ZERO ZERO ZERO is an important, informative read. It has its flaws, and you may have to force yourself to trudge through

some parts.

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