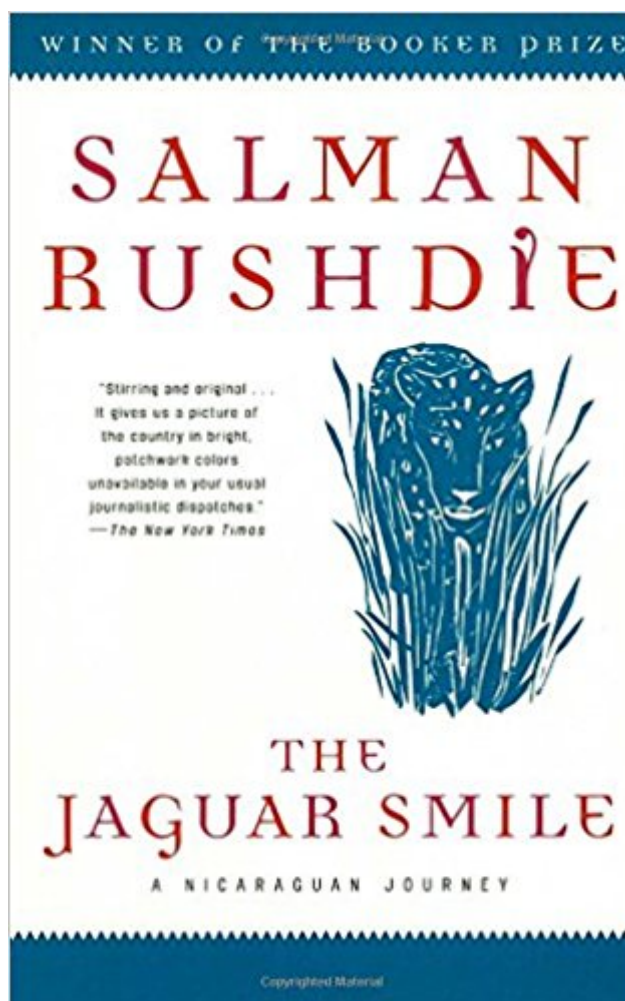


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The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey



Synopsis

“I did not go to Nicaragua intending to write a book, or, indeed, to write at all: but my encounter with the place affected me so deeply that in the end I had no choice.” So notes Salman Rushdie in his first work of nonfiction, a book as imaginative and meaningful as his acclaimed novels. In *The Jaguar Smile*, Rushdie paints a brilliantly sharp and haunting portrait of the people, the politics, the terrain, and the poetry of “a country in which the ancient, opposing forces of creation and destruction were in violent collision.” Recounting his travels there in 1986, in the midst of America’s behind-the-scenes war against the Sandinistas, Rushdie reveals a nation resounding to the clashes between government and individuals, history and morality.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Bombay-born novelist Rushdie (*Midnight’s Children*) visited Nicaragua in 1986 and here writes of poetry recitals, political rallies, meetings with peasants, soldiers and members of the opposition. PW noted that Rushdie believes the Sandinistas have made mistakes but that “the Nicaraguan people have a right not to be ‘squashed’ by the United States.” Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Indian writer Rushdie adds his personal narrative to the crescendo of anti-contra books. He, too, finds little to support unbridled U.S. intervention in violation of international law (as interpreted by the International Court of Justice). Some of his arguments ring loud and clear: How could an oppressive

and unpopular government dare to arm the civilian population as the Sandinistas have done? Where are the omnipresent photos of Lenin and Stalin so typical of "red" regimes? Isn't the United States engaged in another Chile or Vietnam-like debacle? In his view the Sandinistas see themselves as the saviors of Central American independence and the Nicaraguan people as struggling to maintain a measure of what they have gained. Rushdie writes well and the book is both amusing and informative. Recommended. Louise Leonard, Univ. of Florida Lib., Gainesville
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The least favorite book I've ever read was "Fury" by Rushdie. I thought I'd give him another try: this time in non-fiction. "Jaguar" is more engaging but I didn't take away much from the book. Sure, censorship is bad. Got it. Sure, the US's preoccupation with Nicaragua was irrational. Fair enough. Other than that, the only blast of insight I took was that the Sandinista revolution was made up of (amateur) poets. The book was either too short to be really informative or mercifully short because nothing deep was coming. Just can't get behind the whole Rushdie thing.

Very interesting!!

very interesting story. well told. made even more interesting that Ortega is back in power.

It was not what I expected. I lost interest in reading it, and I abandoned it. I will not be buying any more from that author.

As a frequent visitor to Nica, I think this is a great first person review of a visit to Nica in the 80s, and a decent historical perspective from the mid 90s. Many of the things he says about Nica and its people are true. Fascinating views of the Sandinista leaders prior to the 1994 win by Chamorro. Ever Rosario Murillo shows up, in a small way.

This is an interesting book on the Nicaraguan Revolution, sometimes referred to as the Sandista, Contra issues. It is one observers view of how things were in Nicaragua during the tail end of that time. The author is not completely un-biased, nobody is, but he does do a good job of presenting what he saw there without choosing sides and is upfront about his bent. Over all a useful glimpse into an important part of that countries history.

This is a better than average version of the many VIP accounts of the Sandinista revolution that the government fostered in the 1980s. Rushdie's sympathy is realistic, coming from a "Third world" background as he does, and it is tempered with healthy skepticism and a sense of the absurd that makes for interesting reading. It's still a pretty shallow, Potemkin village, treatment of a beautiful country with a fascinating history and culture. Rushdie writes a lot about the past haunting the present, but his Nicaraguan history starts with Sandino, and he has very little sense of the country as a land of towering volcanoes, frequent earthquakes, and generally spectacular natural environment. He seems to look down on Nicaragua because it isn't as heavily populated as India and Pakistan. The book is a pretty good snapshot of a politico-social moment in time, but as time marches on it seems more and more dated and irrelevant-- like the abandoned "journalist hotels" in Managua during the 1990s, when the staff sat around like cargo-culters, waiting for the magical foreign goodies to return.

I have lived for 2 weeks in Nicaragua last summer and fell in love with the country and its people. This book reminded me of heroic Nicaraguans and their unbelievable optimism and stamina.

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