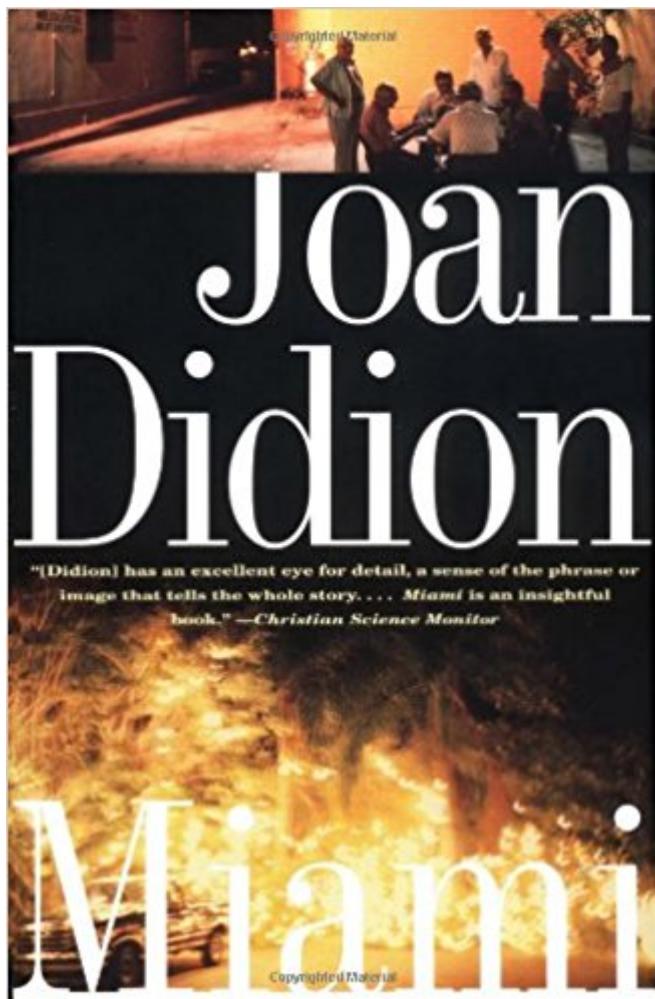


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# Miami



## **Synopsis**

It is where Fidel Castro raised money to overthrow Batista and where two generations of Castro's enemies have raised armies to overthrow him, so far without success. It is where the bitter opera of Cuban exile intersects with the cynicism of U.S. foreign policy. It is a city whose skyrocketing murder rate is fueled by the cocaine trade, racial discontent, and an undeclared war on the island ninety miles to the south. As Didion follows Miami's drift into a Third World capital, she also locates its position in the secret history of the Cold War, from the Bay of Pigs to the Reagan doctrine and from the Kennedy assassination to the Watergate break-in. Miami is not just a portrait of a city, but a masterly study of immigration and exile, passion, hypocrisy, and political violence.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

PW reported that Didion's style, "while it suffers overload, will delight her readers as she swims in the mainstream of the growing run of 'Miami' books." She portrays today's Miami as a hotbed of conspiracy and endless meetings among wealthy Cuban-Americans plotting Castro's overthrow. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Though Didion dissects Floridas hot spot, the objective here, however, is not so much of a profile of the city as a political analysis of the Miami Cuban mind, observed LJs reviewer. By combining her novelists ear and journalists eye, Didion gives the reader a sense of the never-ending feeling of exile that is locked in the heart of every refugee. This remains a masterful polemic. Copyright 1999

The story of the Cuban exiles in Miami deserves to be told with drama and passion because that is what it has been. In this page-turner, Joan Didion captures the rejection and racism that the Cuban exiles first encountered in Miami when they emigrated from Cuba after Castro assumed power. She shows how some of the Cubans became successful businesspersons, political powerbrokers, shapers of local culture, renowned humanitarians and philanthropists, expert propagandists, able diplomats, drug runners, muggers, and internationally renowned terrorists. We see the close relationship the Cuban exiles formed with the USA government, especially its clandestine agencies. We learn that in the 1960s Miami essentially became a CIA recruiting and operational-staging center. Didion tells us that the CIA had as much as 120,000 "regular agents" (full and part-time) stationed in south Florida. It had a flotilla of small boats (often used for terrorist raids on Cuba), making it the third largest navy in the western hemisphere at the time. It owned airline companies in the Miami area and holding companies that lent itself loans for covert operations. "There were [also] hundreds of pieces of Miami real estate, residential bungalows maintained as safe houses, waterfront properties maintained as safe harbors" as well as "fifty five other front businesses" and "CIA boat shops," "guns shops," real-estate, travel and detective agencies (pp. 90-91). Yet the relationship between the Cuban Americans and the USA has been a troubled one. Although the Cuban Americans find themselves dependent on the USA for maintaining their struggle against Castro, they also don't trust the government, blaming it for their loss at the Bay of Pigs and for adopting policies soft on Castro. Likewise, the USA finds some Cuban Americans helpful in its secret foreign adventures (Chile, Nicaragua, Angola, etc.) as well as a nuisance when these terrorist elements assassinate foreign diplomats, blow up airplanes and banks, and murder USA citizens. Particularly poignant is Didion's description of the Cuban Americans' personal and often internecine struggle over understanding themselves as immigrants or exiles. These struggles have resulted in broken friendships, shunning, public ridicule, financial loss, bodily harm and death. The book only covers Miami until 1987. I wish Didion would update the book, although it might be dangerous for her to do so. This is a great read and well worth the purchase.

This is an essential book about Miami in the 70's and the 80's. It explores all the implication that the influx of Cuban nationals had on the tip of Florida, the drug trade, the economic boom and later the rise in crime. This book doesn't sugar coat anything, and after reading it, you actually feel that you know too much and your life is in danger. It portrays a compendium of news, since Didion was a

journalist, and you are basically getting unbiased information. Great book and a must read to those interested in Miami, Florida, or interested in Cuban politics.

I am one of those who absolutely love Didion's style. Her long meandering sentences, laden with subordinate clauses that wind down a long trail of adjectives and phrasings, remind me of Hunter Thompson on Sherry instead of meth, until reaching a conclusion that is at once obvious and profound. Ah, where was I? Oh yes, I was captured by Didion's "The Year of Magical Thinking" after losing a loved one, and found her book to be the only one that came close to capturing the sorrow and ennui of that period of my life. I love her ideoyncratic style, and it served "Miami" well. She serves up the threats unveiled and the danger open and unguarded as she talks political assassination and murder in the same breath as Cuban literature and culture. This book captures the mundane face of the patriot in exile who will stop at nothing to regain his homeland, even when that homeland no longer effectively exists. Miami has truly become America's Casablanca, and she looks it in the eye without flinching. A political and social study that is more timely than many current tomes.

This was written some time ago, but much of it is relevant to today - especially as we currently have two Cubans running for the presidency. If either of them get close then this book becomes required reading. Joan Didion's writing style is probably not for everyone, but if you stick with it for a few chapters you'll pick up the harmonics and find yourself wondering if maybe you should check out some of her other books as well. One I enjoyed was the White Album. Among the great images she implants in your mind is a tour she took of Ronald and Nancy Reagan's house in Sacramento. She noted how there were no bookcases, and therefore no books in evidence. How could this happen - that we would elect someone who doesn't read? Well it did happen, and it marks the point at which GOP voters started dumbing down and voting for people with whom they'd want to share a beer - and not someone with a vision, wisdom, and the skill to take this great experiment to the next level. We brought this greatly diminished GOP on ourselves, and it's up to us to fix it - and restore a loyal opposition that works for the common good. Brief rant aside, my recommendation is to read this book if you're interested in the backstory about the unusual relationship our elected and unelected officials have had with the Cuban community over the years.

It does not get much better than Joan Didion. I love everything I've read that I've read by Ms. Didion.

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