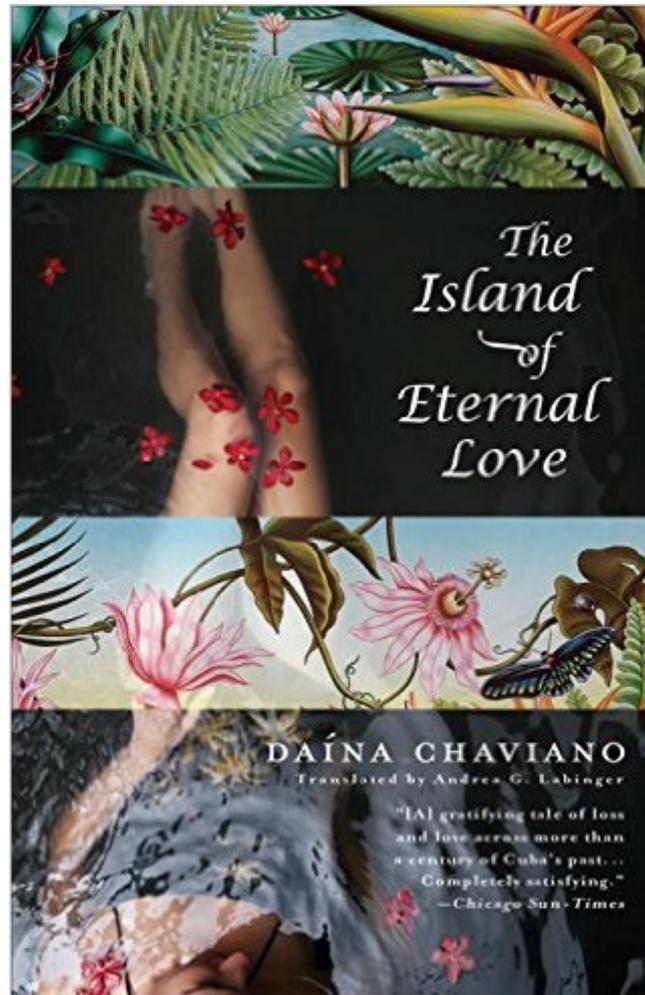


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The Island Of Eternal Love



Synopsis

A magical new novel "of loss and love across more than a century of Cuba's past."(Chicago Sun-Times) In an effort to escape her solitude in Miami, Cecilia seeks refuge in a bar where she meets Amalia, a mysterious old woman whose fascinating tale keeps Cecilia returning night after night. Her powerful story of long-vanished epochs weaves the saga of three families from far-flung pieces of the world. A suicide in China unleashes a chain of family reactions; a strange curse pursues certain women in a Spanish town; and a young woman is seized from her home on the African coast and transported to an unfamiliar world. These characters' lives will become entwined over time, from Cuba under Spanish colonial rule to the present day. Ardent, predestined loves from the past will gain renewed strength in Cecilia, who is also obsessed by the mystery of a phantom house that appears and disappears throughout the city of Miami, and whose secret she is attempting to discover. The Island of Eternal Love is an historical family saga with many plot lines and an atmosphere charged with mystery. Published in 25 languages, it has become the most widely-translated Cuban novel of all time.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Island of Eternal Love by Daina Chaviano centers on Cecilia, a Miami journalist, who after having migrated during the 1994 Cuban exodus is experiencing bouts of homesickness and depression. At the insistence of friends, she is reluctantly dragged along for a night out and meets an old woman in the back of the club who commences to tell her life story to Cecilia. Finding more interest in the old woman's story than the club scene, Cecilia anxiously returns on a regular basis to

hear the next episode in the soap opera-like saga. Therein, the history of Cuba unfolds in the old woman's rendering of an enchanting multi-generational love story. The reader is transported back to China and follows the migration of a young, hopeful Chinese family to the island and learns of the survival, assimilation, and racial challenges that ensue. The Spanish conquerors and the enslaved Africans are represented in their historical context and the comingling of the races is inevitable and evident in the colorful landscape of Cubans today. What also emerges is the manifestation of curses, superstitions, and mythical lore evidenced in segments where a mischievous imp torments the chosen women of one family for generations and a mysterious phantom house randomly that appears throughout Little Havana, which ironically (or perhaps it is fate) becomes Cecilia's assignment at the newspaper where she is a reporter. The author eventually bridges the significance of the house, the disjointed family saga, and Cecilia's angst to wrap up the novel nicely. This was my first time reading Chaviano and I chose to read it based on the synopsis, which hinted at a cross-cultural tale that explored the African, Chinese and Spanish ancestry of the Cuban people.

I have just finished -- for the second time -- a journey through the ethnic history of a people -- my people -- in a land of love and blood, a land of magically captivating landscapes in which sun and moon dance to the intoxicating rhythms of a gently rolling sea. Chaviano's enthralling story has wrapped me in a nostalgic dream, one that has dwelt in my subconscious mind for years. It was the dream of a beautiful island paradise, one where love is indeed eternal, where the warm breezes of the Malecon enticed one with their romantic whispers, where the night pulsed with vibrant music, the music of the masters -- Ernesto Lecuona and Benny More... This dream awakened once more in me as I read this enchanting story, which weaves the tales of three different families, three different ethnic groups, into one single thread. The experiences of each family also serve to highlight key periods of Cuban history. There is the Chinese family, who seeks refuge from war in a land already sheltering their fellow countrymen. There is the African family, in the person of a young girl cruelly snatched from the bosom of her tribe, to be sold into slavery. Then there is the family from Spain, whose female members inherit a strangely humorous curse. Cecilia, the protagonist, ties everything together through her unusual conversations with a mysterious old woman whom she meets in a Little Havana bar. This Miami neighborhood has been thus nicknamed for its heavy concentration of Cuban immigrants in the '60s and '70s. As Cecilia listens to the old woman's strangely fascinating tale, Cuban boleros play in the background, while vistas of a Havana from a bygone era roll on a screen set up next to the dance floor.

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