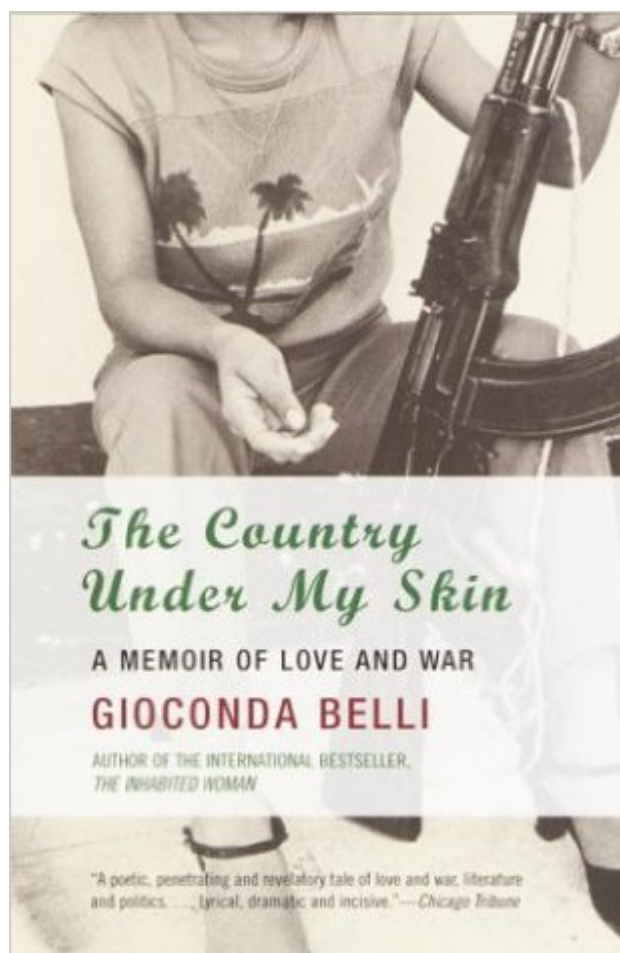


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The Country Under My Skin: A Memoir Of Love And War



Synopsis

An electrifying memoir from the acclaimed Nicaraguan writer (and a wonderfully free and original talent) and central figure in the Sandinista Revolution. Until her early twenties, Gioconda Belli inhabited an upper-class cocoon: sheltered from the poverty in Managua in a world of country clubs and debutante balls; educated abroad; early marriage and motherhood. But in 1970, everything changed. Her growing dissatisfaction with domestic life, and a blossoming awareness of the social inequities in Nicaragua, led her to join the Sandinistas, then a burgeoning but still hidden organization. She would be involved with them over the next twenty years at the highest, and often most dangerous, levels. Her memoir is both a revelatory insider's account of the Revolution and a vivid, intensely felt story about coming of age under extraordinary circumstances. Belli writes with both striking lyricism and candor about her personal and political lives: about her family, her children, the men in her life; about her poetry; about the dichotomies between her birth-right and the life she chose for herself; about the failures and triumphs of the Revolution; about her current life, divided between California (with her American husband and their children) and Nicaragua; and about her sustained and sustaining passion for her country and its people. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

The Power of Passion in Gioconda Belli's *The Country Under My Skin* The passions of womanhood must be God's greatest gift to humanity. If every woman would stand up and cultivate this treasure,

each in her own way and with her individual talents, they could generate the inherent wisdom, power and goodness of their passions into peace. It is improbable that it could be world peace, and yet, the somehow more profound and practical inner peace is what those women would treasure most. If there was any doubt that this was possible, it was completely dispelled after journeying through Gioconda Belli's remarkable memoir, *The Country Under My Skin*. Hers is a tale of passion told through the guises of love, patriotism, motherhood, poetry and war. She introduces herself as the protected, educated daughter of respectable, bourgeois parents who would be more comfortable at a country club than at a secret meeting of subversive revolutionaries. But it is not long before she begins to reveal how she started as one and became the other. Each chapter tunnels further into what makes her tick, where those passions come from and how they develop from a wild, immature spark into the ardent beliefs and controlled fire of her immense passions. She may be intense, but nobody would accuse Belli of being wishy-washy. She takes us on a journey of self-discovery, showing us the important people and events that shaped her. From such notable personalities as Fidel Castro, Daniel Ortega, and the flurry of other well known artists, writers, subversives, and politicians she introduces, to the intimate intricacies of her own family, Belli's characters help define her. In a haunting and poignant way, what she finds in herself reveals that which all women possess: the passions of womanhood.

I was reminded while reading *COUNTRY* by Belli of a passage early in Rebecca West's *BLACK LAMB AND GREY FALCON* in which she writes that men suffer from lunacy of being too much of the world, and women suffer from being too local, too involved in their own personal lives. Belli does not suffer either, but rather finds a balance in her narration between the concerns of her worldly life with the concerns of her personal life. She recounts in similar voice the dramas of her involvement with the Sandinistas and her rise in the eventual government the rebel group achieved and the complications of her personal life as her first marriage and then her second crumbled. She writes about herself as a *Doña* a Quixote, seeking to make the world a better place, and having her own adventures, and the titles of each chapter charmingly advance this thematic idea, having a similar style to Cervantes' work (which I am reading now). For example, chapter 22 is titled, "On the hectic preparations for the attacks and on how I was unexpectedly called to perform a dangerous mission." Belli gives a compelling account in these chapters of the egregious human rights violations of the Somoza dictatorship that the Sandinistas sought to overthrow. The reader is walked through her early life, the daily life of a privileged Nicaraguan who felt a moral imperative to make a change in the government of her country. She also recounts her feelings about the Reagan administration's

support of the Contras who sought to overthrow the Sandinista government. The actions of the United States, according to Belli in COUNTRY, were illustrative of why the United States is not universally beloved.

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