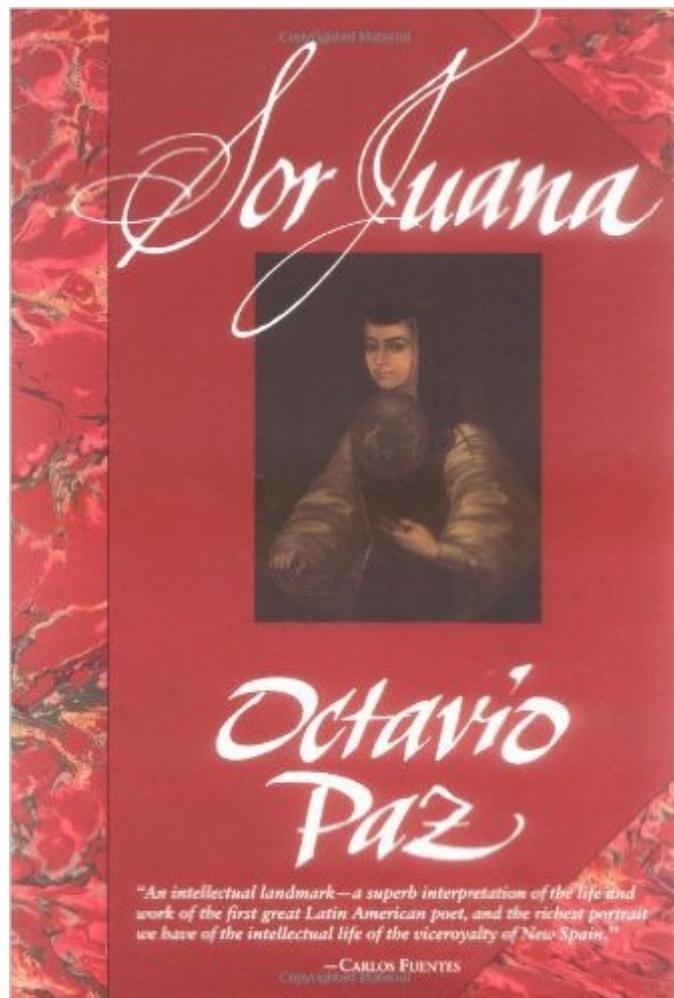


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Sor Juana: Or, The Traps Of Faith (Or, The Traps Of Fiaht)



Synopsis

Mexico's leading poet, essayist, and cultural critic writes of a Mexican poet of another time and another world, the world of seventeenth-century New Spain. His subject is Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the most striking figure in all of Spanish-American colonial literature and one of the great poets of her age. Her life reads like a novel. A spirited and precocious girl, one of six illegitimate children, is sent to live with relatives in the capital city. She becomes known for her beauty, wit, and amazing erudition, and is taken into the court as the Viceroy's protégée. For five years she enjoys the pleasures of life at court--then abruptly, at twenty, enters a convent for life. Yet, no recluse, she transforms the convent locutory into a literary and intellectual salon; she amasses an impressive library and collects scientific instruments, reads insatiably, composes poems, and corresponds with literati in Spain. To the consternation of the prelates of the Church, she persists in circulating her poems, redolent more of the court than the cloister. Her plays are performed, volumes of her poetry are published abroad, and her genius begins to be recognized throughout the Hispanic world. Suddenly she surrenders her books, forswears all literary pursuits, and signs in blood a renunciation of secular learning. The rest is silence. She dies two years later, at forty-six. Octavio Paz has long been intrigued by the enigmas of Sor Juana's personality and career. Why did she become a nun? How could she renounce her lifelong passion for writing and learning? Such questions can be answered only in the context of the world in which she lived. Paz gives a masterly portrayal of the life and culture of New Spain and the political and ideological forces at work in that autocratic, theocratic, male-dominated society, in which the subjugation of women was absolute. Just as Paz illuminates Sor Juana's life by placing it in its historical setting, so he situates her work in relation to the traditions that nurtured it. With critical authority he singles out the qualities that distinguish her work and mark her uniqueness as a poet. To Paz her writings, like her life, epitomize the struggle of the individual, and in particular the individual woman, for creative fulfillment and self-expression.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book by the Nobel Prize winner Octavio Paz is a great account of the life of one of the best writers of Hispanic literature. Sor Juana created astonishing poems about life, love, and people. It is a pity that only little is known about the facts of her life. As with Shakespeare, most of what we know about her comes from her literary legacy. Octavio Paz is able to solve some of the mystery that surrounds Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz.

She winds up caught up in the "Traps of Faith" as Paz refers to the traps sprung by her time and lifetime which doomed her to a shortened life-span and an end to her excellent writings from poetry to prose to drama along with an end to her library filled with books and tomes from her time. Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz is inspirational as a poetess in particular and Paz salutes this woman with his hefty biography filling in the blanks as to the influences that surrounded and imbued Sor Juana with her colourful figures and joyous sufferings that inspired her to dig for gold in the mines of the baroque affectations of her time. For SorJuanistas a must have-- and you know who you are-- for those unacquainted with Sor Juana Ines de La Cruz-- you'll find out how much you are missing.

This is a balanced, penetrating examination of Sor Juana and the elements that shaped her life. She understood that her passion was the pursuit of knowledge and that she could never fulfill her life's work unless she became a nun. In addition to describing Sor Juana Paz enlightens his readers about the masculine society into which she was born. She was a brave, talented woman who spoke up for what she believed in.

This is a solid, honest book by a very talented and brilliant author. It takes patience to read but it is written so well it reads like eating a delicious cake. I learned so much from this book, not only about Sor Juana but also about Mexico and Europe of the time. I think there is a need for more authors

like this one. There is no hint of being in a hurry in this book. The feeling that we get is that the love for Sor Juana was with the author for decades. I suspect there must be some new material that has been discovered since the publication of this book but this book will be THE Sor Juana classic for many decades. It asks the right questions.

This lady is honored on Mexican money, is a Saint and people need to know about her life and work. She was brilliant and entertained Europeans and irritated the catholic church. Deprived of all things she counted precious - books, equipment and eventually writing tools, ink and paper - what we have of her life and work are truly inspiring.

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