



Sor Juana's Second Dream: A Novel

Alicia Gaspar de Alba

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This bold novel unravels the mystery and complexity of the woman Carlos Fuentes calls "the first great Latin American poet." Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695), poet, playwright, rhetorician, and musician, is often equated with Sappho, the lesbian poet whom Plato baptized the "Tenth Muse."

The Mexican nun has fascinated readers around the world for centuries as scholars have attempted to understand her brilliance, her feminism, the affairs of her heart, her decision to enter a convent at the beginning of her luminous intellectual career.

Juana Ramírez de Asbaje, an illegitimate *criolla*, is sixteen when word of her self-taught erudition travels to the palace in Mexico City and she becomes an attendant to Doña Leonor Carreto, Marquesa de Mancera. Wanting only to study, confused by her love for la Marquesa, and loathe to marry, in five years Juana becomes Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz in the Convent of Santa Paula of the Order of San Jerónimo. There, her quill becomes her salvation and damnation as her notoriety mounts with each new artistic commission. Popular with court and clergy, she receives a stream of guests at the convent, among them la Condesa de Paredes, who becomes Sor Juana's intimate friend. More than two decades later, after brilliantly defending her right to think, teach, and write, Sor Juana appears before the Inquisition and abruptly withdraws from the spotlight.

Mixing fiction with Sor Juana's own words, and drawing on the most recent Sor Juana scholarship, Alicia Gaspar de Alba creates the most full-bodied portrait of Mexico's Tenth Muse to date. This remarkable novel about a remarkable woman will enlighten a new generation of readers, and stoke the interest of devotees who already are captivated by the inspiring Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

"An adventuresome exploration into the lyrical and historical vision of an extraordinary woman, written by an extraordinary novelist who has given us a new possibility to dream and invent Sor Juana Inés all over again."--Marjorie Agosín, Wellesley College

"Beautifully written, without doubt the best book I have read this year. A masterpiece."--Greg Sarris, author of *Watermelon Nights*

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David Butler:

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