

Film Notes

By Harriet Norman

I, Worst of All

1990 | 105mins

Director: María Luisa Bemberg

Starring: Héctor Alterio, Lautaro Murúa, Assumpta Serna



[f](#) [X](#) [@](#) [in](#) [v](#) [d](#) @FilmBathUK



Excellent

Fair

Poor

I, the Worst of All transports us to a 17th century Mexican convent, where renowned writer, philosopher and poet Sor Juana Inés dela Cruz (Assumpta Serna) lives. When the arrival of a new viceroy (Héctor Alterio) also heralds that of a new conservative archbishop (Lautaro Murúa), the shadow of the Spanish inquisition begins to encroach upon Sor Juana's comfortable reclusion in the convent.

Set largely within the interior of the convent, this film gives a thought-provoking account of this tumultuous part of our protagonist's life. Based on the real-life historical figure, Sor Juana has been described as the first feminist in the America's. This film clearly shows the vastness of Sor Juana's intellect, and how this defies the expectations of the society of the time. The costuming and set design tastefully enhance this intimate drama, with Sor Juana's rich interior life represented by the numerous books, papers and unique objects surrounding her.

Strong parallels can be drawn between the proto-feminist struggles of Sor Juana and those of director María Luisa Bemberg herself. Having lived the first part of her life according to more traditional expectations as a wife and mother of four, Bemberg divorced her husband in 1955 (not legally recognised in Argentina until 1987), and began directing films in her fifties.

In addition to her directing, Bemberg founded the Unión Feminista Argentina (UFA) in 1970, which helped spread second wave feminism in Argentina. In 1981, she partnered with Lita Stantic to found the GEA, the first female-owned film company in Argentina.

Overall, Bemberg's works 'defied censorship...and oppressive power structures' (Invisible Women, 2024), and both Bemberg and *I, Worst of All's* Sor Juana have rich and continuing legacies of resisting expected roles in society.

'I, the Worst of All is an impassioned feminist cry drawn in a cinematic vocabulary that is both minimalist and Expressionist. As the characters move through semi-abstract settings, their haunted faces reveal their inner lives. With its many medium close-ups ... the film is a visually compelling portrait gallery of people caught in a war between rationalism and religious zealotry.'

-The New York Times

What did you think of the film? Please mark or tear the number.

Please add any further comments here

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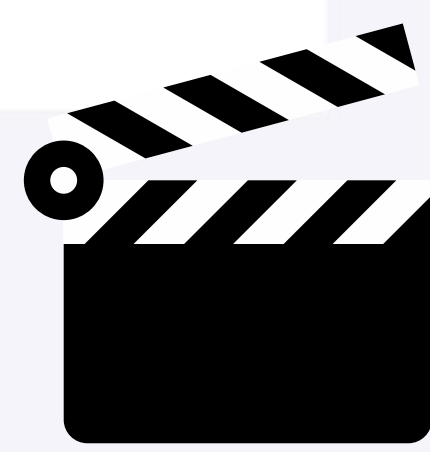


Did You Know?

- The film is based on the book *Sor Juana Or: The Traps of Faith* (1988) by nobel prize winner Octavio Paz.
- Argentina’s entry for the Best Foreign Language Film category at the 63rd Academy Awards in 1991, though was not ultimately selected.
- In 1995 Sor Juana Inés dela Cruz’s name was inscribed onto the wall of honor in Mexican Congress.

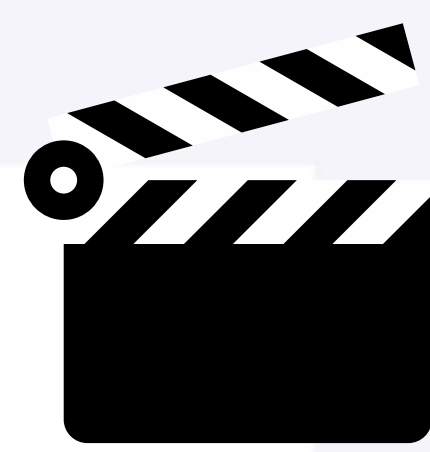
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If you enjoyed this film, you might like:



Anchoress (1993)

Partly based on anchorite Christine Carpenter. Follows a girl who sees visions of the Virgin Mary, and is walled into her village church.



Doubt (2008)

Set in a Catholic elementary school in The Bronx, New York City. After Sister James reports a student for disquieting her faith, more issues unravel.

SCAN ME



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