

Finalmente, los lectores de estas cartas encontrarán una autorreferencialidad constante, una suerte de ensimismamiento en ocasiones obsesivo. Ese YO con mayúsculas presente en estas cartas puede atribuirse al sostenido intento de Julia de insertar en su vida y en su obra una fuerte subjetividad femenina; también habla de un ser dislocado, desubicado, que lucha constantemente por anclar sus experiencias como ser humano y como creadora. Estas cartas muestran que su literatura se situó al margen de los discursos autorizados de su época y que Julia, como sujeto femenino, tuvo que asumir una posición decisiva en cuanto a las distorsiones de su imagen pública. Aquí Julia habla por sí misma, rompiendo el silencio que ha acompañado muchos aspectos de su vida y de su obra.

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**Dhondt, Reindert. *Carlos Fuentes y el pensamiento barroco*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2015. 359 pp.**

In *Carlos Fuentes y el pensamiento barroco*, Reindert Dhondt accomplishes the first systematic study of the Baroque in much of the work of Carlos Fuentes. Through a rigorous analysis of Fuentes's essays, interviews, and novels such as *Aura* (1962) and *En todas las familias felices* (2006), Dhondt elucidates the Boom writer's particular vision of modernity. That is, he illustrates how Fuentes's idea of modernity in Latin America is filtered through a Baroque sensibility for disillusionment, melancholy, hybridity, and the ambiguous in the New World.

The first chapter delves into what the Baroque and Neo-Baroque mean in the New World. Dhondt outlines major points of interest in its conceptualization: as a transhistorical category in the work of Heinrich Wölfflin; as an export to the Americas, later to be shunned as a colonial tool; conversely, as an assimilated style subversive to imperialism; and lastly, as an aesthetic of the abject in the thought of Sarduy. The greater part of this chapter, however, examines Fuentes's interviews and historically-minded work, like *El espejo enterrado* (1993), to see the Baroque from his perspective as an inventive "language of mestizaje and uncertainty," in the New World (29). What Dhondt uncovers is an incredibly dynamic and politicized, if ambivalent, vision of the Baroque as a beacon of counterculture.

From the second chapter onwards, the book considers this more subversive expression of the Baroque in the novel *Aura*. Although traditionally considered a Gothic text, Dhondt persuasively signals its Baroque qualities. Through its themes of immortality and desire beyond death along with recurrent topoi of melancholy and ruins, Dhondt presents intertextualities that refer to the work of Quevedo and Walter Benjamin's theory of the Baroque. Additionally, Dhondt points out that, although Fuentes treats the Baroque as a transhistorical category, it is still fully historical. He joins other scholars like Emir Rodríguez Monegal in arguing that *Aura* supports an allegorical view of nineteenth-century Mexico facing its past and trying to determine its future as a nation. Indeed, this is a more politically engaged reading than has tended to be accorded to this mere "Gothic" tale.

This political vision and the possibility of a future utopia are further explored in the third chapter, which deals with *Constancia* from the novel, *Constancia y otras novelas para vírgenes* (1989). A summary of the critical interpretations for this novel are given, along with an outline of formal internal aspects and themes. Most interesting however, is the continued dialogue between Benjamin's topoi—particularly of ruins—and Fuentes's vision of history and time. As in Benjamin's work on German Baroque drama, Fuentes's *Constancia* involves a skeptical vision of history as a ruin. Moreover, it is shown to signal the lost enterprise of Mexican nationalism, identity, progress, and modernity. These ruins and the fragmentation of time, according to Dhondt, also present a certain amount of conscience. In other words, the ruins serve to remind the present of the past, encouraging the reconstruction of history so as to right past wrongs and give voice to the voiceless, like the exiled characters of *Constancia*.

In the fourth chapter, Dhondt presents a reading of the Baroque qualities of *La frontera de cristal* (1995), a novel engaged with the issues of US-Mexican immigration and discrimination. In particular, Dhondt uses Bakhtin's cronotrope to explore the loss of time and place that the border provokes in this novel. After describing the socioeconomic and political context of Fuentes's "frontier novels," Dhondt delves into a discussion on the Baroque and frontier cronotropes that converge in the characters' sense of displacement, and above all, disillusionment in the immigrant experience.

In the last and fifth chapter of *Carlos Fuentes y el pensamiento barroco*, Dhondt analyzes the heavier Baroque effect of tragedy, where melancholy is communally shared in the novel, *Todas las familias felices* (2006). Fuentes's influences, such as Faulkner and Tolstoy, are further explained in this chapter. Dhondt also argues that, in this novel, Fuentes reclaims the genre of tragedy in order to provoke social catharsis. That is, Dhondt shows us how in *Todas las familias felices* the Baroque sensibility of Fuentes doesn't stop at noticing melancholy. Rather, there is a subsequent call for positive change in Mexican society, starting with the family unit. This potential, according to Dhondt, is specifically channeled through the communal "chorus" that interweaves the entirety of the novel. The discussion on these choruses is particularly interesting for their function of presenting collective disillusionment and critique of contemporary Mexico, highlighting a more socially-engaged Baroque in the work of Fuentes.

As each chapter of this book carefully demonstrates, the Baroque is a trans-historical, though still historically-conscious and socially-engaged sensibility in the novels of Fuentes. While some readers might perhaps labor a little with the organization of this book, Dhondt's scholarship contributes to a fuller understanding of Fuentes's novelistic production as well as to the present state of the Baroque. As the book convincingly shows in the novels studied, the Baroque is still a very potent sensibility in the cultural production of contemporary Latin America. Ultimately, Dhondt invites new and richer discussions of Fuentes and the questions of alterity and modernity that continue to preoccupy many fields of study.