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Narrative Practice in *Aura*

You open the novel and turn to page 2. Almost instantly you are shocked; in much the same way as he describes the advertisement, Carlos Fuentes seems to have written the novel “addressed to you and nobody else.” At first, Fuentes’s unique choice of narrative perspective confuses and maybe frightens you. With passing pages you become more comfortable in your new position, learn to appreciate the immersive effect of the second person point-of-view, and become engrossed in the new environment Fuentes has provided for you to explore. As you close the back cover not long thereafter, you pause for a minute to reflect on the literary adventure still fresh, alive within your mind.

You reflect upon the innovation you have just experienced. The second person point-of-view is, after all, a very rare approach to narration. You have seen scant examples of this unorthodox convention, and remember its unlimited potential for annoying repetition- a very real danger for authors who attempt so difficult a task as to directly engage the reader through their texts. It is for this reason that you find yourself incredibly impressed with Fuentes; from that mention of the advertisement on the very first page of the novel, you have consistently felt engaged in the narration. In fact, at times it seems that Fuentes is teasing you, handing you individual tiles to a thousand-piece puzzle, and inviting you to attempt to make out a picture from the little you have. You are told your name is Montero, a scholar who is researching the Golden Age of Spain and other historical knowledge, but little else about your person. You are exposed

to strange and upsetting incidents, such as that of the burning cats (p. 59), but you are not granted any more than just a glimpse- you can't even tell whether or not your literary experiences are real or just perceived. In this way Fuentes keeps you in suspense, keeps you hooked on his plot, on his drama- on the themes that he is developing while you are frantically grasping for a hold on reality in Consuelo's dingy house.

You are also struck by the moving and immersive imagery that Fuentes provides for you. You can almost smell the fragrance of Aura's porch plants yourself, taste the blandness of the liver you are served for dinner; you stumble through the text much as your literary self stumbles through the unlit house. When you read the General's manuscripts and look at the photographs, you see Consuelo in your own mind, possibly as a much older version of your own romantic interest, maybe as your vivacious, green-eyed sexual fantasy, or neither- but you see her, you feel Aura's youth next to you in the bed, and you experience the palpable gaze of Consuelo's old eyes as you awake from your sleepy state. Through masterful crafting of imagery, Fuentes has transported you into Consuelo's house, and you may even blink a few times in an attempt to bring yourself back to Earth.

Back in your chair, at your desk, or on your bed, you put down the book and breathe deeply a few times. The experience is over, but you feel something residual- you decide to ponder for a while on what it all meant. You realize that your experience as the protagonist contributed vastly to Fuentes's theme of weakness; of the fragility of both human emotion and the human psyche. Your collective experiences as Montero have left you confused and hungry for knowledge, for an explanation, but you know that this is exactly what Fuentes intended. By transplanting your ego into the story- by giving you

all of Montero's experiences- Fuentes has shown you the inherent instability of human emotions. The ease with which you fall in love with Aura/Consuelo, the somewhat irrational fear of your unfamiliar surroundings, and your near instantaneous assumption that Consuelo has imprisoned Aura against her will are all fine examples of the susceptibility of the human mind to generate scenarios at will; to make up what is not already in front of it. Fuentes wants to show you this weakness, wants you to understand that people are inherently fragile beings, and does so by making the mind of the protagonist and your own thoughts one and the same.

You feel alive, awakened, and refreshed. By addressing his novel to you, Fuentes has opened your eyes not only to the complex tendencies of human cognition, but also to the emotions that are inherent to your very own person. You sigh audibly.

You have just read *Aura*.