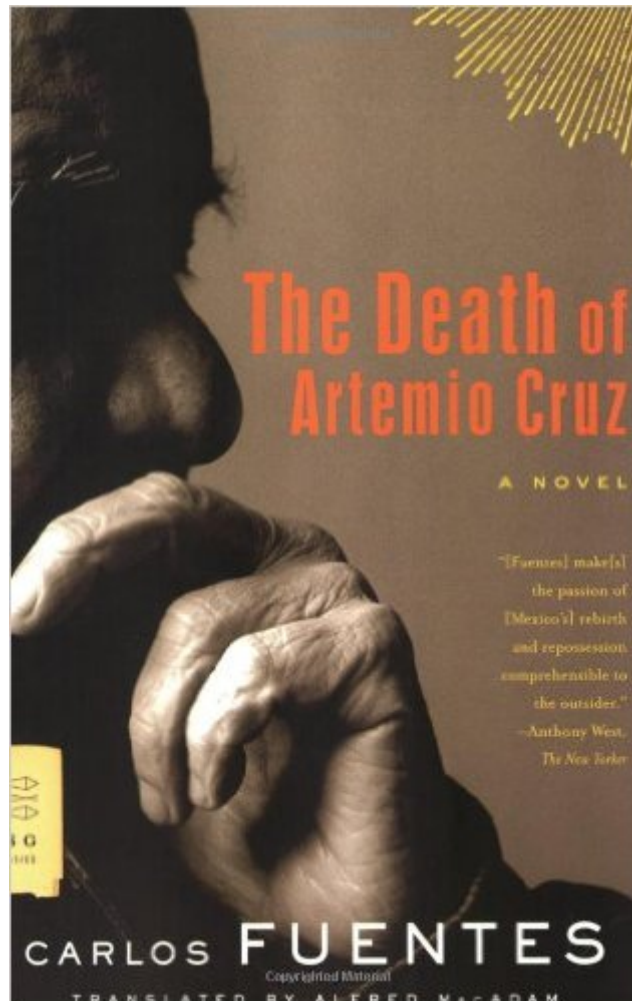


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The Death Of Artemio Cruz: A Novel (FSG Classics)



Synopsis

As the novel opens, Artemio Cruz, the all-powerful newspaper magnate and land baron, lies confined to his bed and, in dreamlike flashes, recalls the pivotal episodes of his life. Carlos Fuentes manipulates the ensuing kaleidoscope of images with dazzling inventiveness, layering memory upon memory, from Cruz's heroic campaigns during the Mexican Revolution, through his relentless climb from poverty to wealth, to his uneasy death. Perhaps Fuentes's masterpiece, *The Death of Artemio Cruz* is a haunting voyage into the soul of modern Mexico.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Artemio Cruz owns a vast empire in Mexico, encompassing newspapers, land, construction and more. He has a beautiful wife and daughter, both of whom he cannot stand, nor they him. His aide, Padilla, a man he trusts with his empire, and one he has grown to love as the son he lost so many years ago. He is so important, so respected, so necessary to the Mexican country that the President tries to impress him, rather than the other way around. But Artemio Cruz is dying, painfully and slowly, and it is while dying that he has a chance to evaluate his life, to take a good look at himself and what he has achieved. Cruz is a complicated man. As a youth, he fought in the various, chaotic revolutions and counter-revolutions that periodically caused Mexico to cease functioning as a nation, becoming little more than a series of loosely connected fiefdoms. Using his intelligence and daring, he was able to secure a command in the fight against Pancho Villa, but more importantly, he also knew when to leave the life of a soldier for a more solid existence. As a young man, he met

Regina, the woman he was to love until his dying day. As an older man, he is respected and influential, but also cold and distant. Gone are the passionate, poorly thought-out heroics of his early adulthood. He no longer loves like it doesn't matter, or cares much for the reality of another person. At his annual New Year's party, Cruz retires early to a comfortable leather chair positioned so he can watch everyone else have fun. The unspoken rules of the party forbids guests to talk to him at all, other than to pay their respects. His wife lives in another city, and a prostitute shares his bed this night, as she has every other night for the past eight years.

The violent society of Mexico in the 19th century produced a bloody revolution that laid the foundations for a new Mexico after 1920. The revolution devoured its dreamers and hopes, as revolutions tend to do, so that it was co-opted by the most violent, least idealistic types, who arranged Mexican society to their benefit, even if the common man ultimately did derive some advantages too. For the winners, especially as the century wore on, it seemed as if goose neck stuffed with pork-liver paté, or perhaps the damask armchairs by a fireplace in the huge living room loomed far larger than social justice. For them, the ruthless grab for power turned out to be a successful gambit. Artemio Cruz is such a successful individual, determined to let nothing stop his rise to the top, taking advantage of every chance brought to him by the tides of war and political intrigue. The backward-forward nature of the narrative, the wordy lyricism interspersed with terse action sequences, and the dwelling upon illness, decay, and death locate this novel on the absolute opposite end of the literary continuum from say, the quiet, spare prose of Japanese author Kawabata Yasunari. This is a novel of bright colors, of deep, intense feelings, a novel in which the author thrives on vocabulary and the effect of the words themselves, a novel of ultimately surprising revelations that do not stop until the very last pages. Artemio Cruz desires power for its own sake, he will stoop to any deed to acquire it. Fuentes scrapes back layer upon layer of the character, digging deep into his psyche to tell why. THE DEATH OF ARTEMIO CRUZ is a highly intellectual, cleverly-constructed novel that is not easy to read.

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