

Critical Insights: Mario Vargas Llosa

Text Reviews

“This collection of original essays looks back thematically through the seven decades of the 2010 Nobel Prize for Literature winner’s opus from the first published short stories in 1959 to his latest work, *El héroe discreto* (2013), as of this writing untranslated into English.

The two introductory biographical essays of part I, “Career, Life and Influence,” are written by the editor, Juan E. De Castro (New School for Liberal Arts, New York).

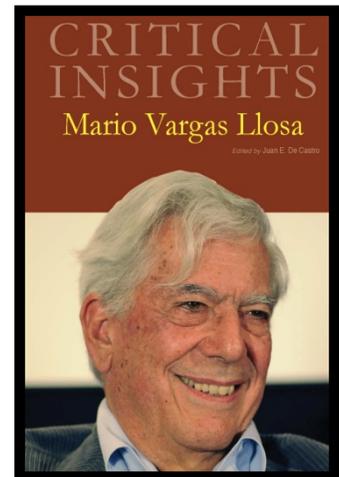
Part II, “Critical Contexts,” deals with the topics of the father figure and ecocriticism in his works and examines his works’ critical reception. By far the largest segments are the 10 essays in the third part, “Critical Readings.” Many of these deal with individual works such as *The Time of the Hero*, *Who Killed Palomino Molero?*, and his short stories. It also has one of the few critical studies of *The Dream of the Celt*, his most recently published work in English.

The volume concludes with a section of resources, including a chronology of Vargas Llosa’s life and a list of his works with English translated titles...All 13 contributors are scholars in Latin American literature, although not necessarily Vargas Llosa. Content-wise, the selective coverage does not treat every novel fully; some, in fact, receive only passing mention. This work also ignores the Peruvian writer’s political activity, theater, and, with one exception, nonfiction.

Readers do not necessarily need to be familiar with all of Vargas Llosa’s body of work to take advantage of this work; through the table of contents and, to a lesser extent, the index, they can pick and choose the chapters that discuss the works of interest. The level of its treatment for the works analyzed is generally appropriate for nonspecialists.

Two recent collections of critical appraisals overlap somewhat with the purpose of this volume. *Vargas Llosa and Latin American Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) focuses primarily on his political views, and *The Cambridge Companion to Mario Vargas Llosa* (Cambridge University Press, 2012) provides a chronological and therefore more comprehensive treatment of his works. Both share some of the same contributors as this one. This latest volume dedicated to Vargas Llosa in the Critical Insights series joins those of fellow Hispanic authors Isabel Allende and Gabriel García Márquez. This title is recommended for public and academic libraries.”

-ARBA



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