

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-0-521-68285-5 — The Cambridge Companion to Mario Vargas Llosa  
Edited by Efraín Kristal, John King  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO  
MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

One of the major novelists in world literature over the last five decades, Mario Vargas Llosa (b. 1936) is also one of Latin America's leading public intellectuals, a critic of art and culture, and a playwright of distinction. This *Companion's* chapters chart the development of Vargas Llosa's writings, from his rise to prominence in the early 1960s to the award of the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2010. The volume traces his literary trajectory, and the ways in which he has reinvented himself as a writer. His vast output of narrative fiction is the main focus, but the connections between his concerns as a creative writer and his rich career as a cultural and political figure are also teased out in this engaging, informative book.

EFRAÍN KRISTAL is Professor and Chair in Comparative Literature at UCLA.

JOHN KING is Professor of Latin American Cultural History at the University of Warwick.

THE CAMBRIDGE  
COMPANION TO  
MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

EDITED BY  
EFRAÍN KRISTAL  
and  
JOHN KING



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
 978-0-521-68285-5 — The Cambridge Companion to Mario Vargas Llosa  
 Edited by Efraín Kristal, John King  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE  
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,  
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of  
 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521682855](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521682855)

© Cambridge University Press & Assessment 2012

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions  
 of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take  
 place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2012

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data*

The Cambridge companion to Mario Vargas Llosa / edited by Efraín Kristal and John King.  
 p. cm. — (Cambridge companions to literature)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-86424-4 — ISBN 978-0-521-68285-5 (pbk.) 1. Vargas Llosa, Mario, 1936—  
 Criticism and interpretation. 2. Vargas Llosa, Mario, 1936— Political activity. 3. Vargas  
 Llosa, Mario, 1936— Influence. I. Kristal, Efraín, 1959— II. King, John, 1950—

PQ8498.32.A65Z627 2012

863 .64—dc23

2011021718

ISBN 978-0-521-86424-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-68285-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence  
 or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this  
 publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will  
 remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-0-521-68285-5 — The Cambridge Companion to Mario Vargas Llosa  
Edited by Efrain Kristal , John King  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

*For Fernando de Szyszlo*

## CONTENTS

	<i>List of contributors</i>	page ix
	<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xii
	<i>Chronology</i>	xiii
	Introduction	I
	EFRAÍN KRISTAL AND JOHN KING	
1	Reality and rebellion: An overview of Mario Vargas Llosa's literary themes	9
	ALONSO CUETO	
2	The early novels: <i>The Time of the Hero</i> and <i>The Green House</i>	22
	GERALD MARTIN	
3	The total novel and the novella: <i>Conversation in The Cathedral</i> and <i>The Cubs</i>	37
	EFRAÍN KRISTAL	
4	Humour and irony: <i>Captain Pantoja and the Special Service</i> and <i>Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter</i>	49
	MICHAEL WOOD	
5	The historical novel: <i>The War of the End of the World</i>	62
	JUAN E. DE CASTRO AND NICHOLAS BIRNS	
6	Innocence and corruption: <i>Who Killed Palomino Molero?</i> and <i>The Storyteller</i>	74
	FIONA J. MACKINTOSH	
		vii

## CONTENTS

7	The political novels: <i>The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta</i> and <i>Death in the Andes</i>	88
	DEBORAH COHN	
8	The erotic novels: <i>In Praise of the Stepmother</i> and <i>The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto</i>	102
	ROY C. BOLAND	
9	The dictator novel: <i>The Feast of the Goat</i>	116
	CLIVE GRIFFIN	
10	From utopia to reconciliation: <i>The Way to Paradise</i> , <i>The Bad Girl</i> and <i>The Dream of the Celt</i>	129
	EFRAÍN KRISTAL	
11	The essays	148
	JOHN KING	
12	The memoir: <i>A Fish in the Water</i>	174
	KELLY AUSTIN	
13	The plays	185
	EVELYN FISHBURN	
14	Film and the novels	199
	CAROLINA SITNISKY	
15	An interview	212
	EFRAÍN KRISTAL AND JOHN KING WITH MARIO VARGAS LLOSA	
	<i>Further reading</i>	221
	<i>General index</i>	227
	<i>Index of selected fictional characters</i>	231
	<i>Index of selected works by Vargas Llosa</i>	232

## CONTRIBUTORS

KELLY AUSTIN is Assistant Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Chicago. Her research interests include literature of the Americas, translation studies and poetry. She has translated the poetry of Blanca Varela and is currently working on a book on Whitman, Neruda and translation. Her recent publications include 'History of the Southern Cone Novel: Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay' for *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of the Novel* (2010).

NICHOLAS BIRNS teaches at Eugene Lang College, The New School for Liberal Arts, New York. He is author of *Understanding Anthony Powell* (2004), *Theory After Theory* (2010) and co-editor of *Vargas Llosa and Latin American Politics* (2010).

ROY C. BOLAND is Honorary Professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia. His books include *Oedipus and the Papa State: A Study of Individual and Social Psychology in Mario Vargas Llosa's Novels of Peruvian Reality* (1988), *Culture and Customs of El Salvador* (2001), and *Una rara comedia. Visión y revisión de las novelas de Mario Vargas Llosa* (2003). He is the general editor of *Antipodas*, the Journal of Hispanic and Galician Studies of Australia and New Zealand. In 2009 he was awarded the Cross of the Order of Isabel la Católica by the King of Spain, for his contributions to Hispanism.

JUAN E. DE CASTRO is an Associate Professor at Eugene Lang College, The New School for Liberal Arts, New York. He has published *Mario Vargas Llosa: Public Intellectual in Neoliberal Latin America* (2011), *The Spaces of Latin American Literature: Tradition, Globalization and Cultural Production* (2008), and *Mestizo Nations: Race, Culture, and Conformity in Latin American Literature* (2002). With Nicholas Birns he co-edited *Vargas Llosa and Latin American Politics* (2010).

DEBORAH COHN is Associate Professor of Spanish and American Studies at Indiana University, Bloomington. She is the author of *The Latin American Literary Boom and U.S. Nationalism during the Cold War* (forthcoming) and *History and Memory in the Two Souths: Recent Southern and Spanish American Fiction* (1999). She has published widely on Spanish American and US fiction.

## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

ALONSO CUETO has published twelve novels, several short story collections and a play. His novel *La hora azul* received the 2005 Herralde Prize. He is also a professor at the Universidad Católica del Perú and a member of the Academia Peruana de la Lengua, and was a Fellow of the Guggenheim Foundation.

EVELYN FISHBURN was recently appointed Honorary Professor at University College London, where she was Visiting Professor for many years, and holds a Professor Emeritus appointment at London Metropolitan University. Her interests include the writings of Spanish American women and the use of humour in literature. The main focus of her research, however, is the work of Jorge Luis Borges, on whom she has published widely, including *A Borges Dictionary* and *Borges and Europe Revisited*. She has co-translated two plays by Vargas Llosa for radio.

CLIVE GRIFFIN is University Lecturer in Latin American Literature at Oxford University, and Fellow in Spanish at Trinity College, Oxford. His areas of research include the history of the book in sixteenth-century Spain and its American colonies, and modern Spanish American literature. His most recent book is *Oficiales de imprenta, herejía, e Inquisición en la España del siglo XVI* (2009).

JOHN KING is Professor of Latin American Cultural History at the University of Warwick. He has authored and edited more than a dozen books on Latin American culture, including editing and translating several books of Vargas Llosa's essays. His most recent monograph is *The Role of Mexico's Plural in Latin American Literary and Political Culture* (2007).

EFRAÍN KRISTAL is Professor of Spanish and Comparative Literature at UCLA. He is the author of *Temptation of the Word: The Novels of Mario Vargas Llosa* (1998) and *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation* (2002). He edited *The Cambridge Companion to the Latin American Novel* (2005) and the Penguin edition of Jorge Luis Borges's *Poems of the Night* (2010).

FIONA J. MACKINTOSH is a Senior Lecturer in Latin American Literature at the University of Edinburgh. She has a particular interest in Argentinian writing and has published extensively on the work of the poet Alejandra Pizarnik. With Karl Posso, she co-edited *Arbol de Alejandra: Pizarnik Reassessed* (2007), and she is the author of *Childhood in the Works of Silvina Ocampo and Alejandra Pizarnik* (2003).

GERALD MARTIN is Andrew W. Mellon Emeritus Professor of Modern Languages at the University of Pittsburgh. He translated and edited Miguel Angel Asturias's *Hombres de maíz* (1981, prologue by Mario Vargas Llosa), wrote several chapters on literature and culture for the *Cambridge History of Latin America*, vol. III (1985), vol. IV (1986), vol. X (1995) and vol. XI (1995), and wrote *Journeys*



## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

*through the Labyrinth* (1989) on the Latin American novel. He published *Gabriel García Márquez: A Life* in 2008 and is currently writing a biography of Vargas Llosa.

CAROLINA SITNISKY is Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Pomona College, California. She has published several articles on Latin American cinema and literature and is currently co-editing a volume on Latin America's twenty-first-century cinema. Her current research focuses on twentieth-century Latin American film adaptations.

MICHAEL WOOD is Charles Barnwell Straut Class of 1923 Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Princeton University. He has written books on Vladimir Nabokov, Luis Buñuel, Franz Kafka and Gabriel García Márquez, as well as *The Road to Delphi* (2003), *America in the Movies* (1975, 1989), *Children of Silence* (1998), *Literature and the Taste of Knowledge* (2005), and *Yeats and Violence* (2010). A member of the American Philosophical Society and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he is a regular contributor to the *London Review of Books* and the *New York Review of Books*.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We dedicate this book to Fernando de Szyszlo. He generously gave us permission to reproduce the image of the painting that inspired a chapter of Mario Vargas Llosa's *In Praise of the Stepmother* for the cover of this volume. We decided that this was an opportunity to recognise his achievements as a towering figure of twentieth-century Latin American painting and Peruvian culture. We also want to express our special gratitude to Rosvita Rauch for her intensive work with us, editing the manuscript we submitted to the press, for translating Alonso Cueto's contribution, and for creating the index in consultation with us. Rosvita helped us create a house style for our editing, and she went over every piece with astute editorial suggestions. We would also like to thank Fernando Carvallo, who conducted an interview with the Peruvian film-maker Francisco Lombardi, which was helpful for Carolina Sitnisky's chapter on Vargas Llosa and film. Edward Chauca and Gabriela Venegas prepared preliminary versions of the chronology and further reading. Ruben Gallo assisted us in obtaining access to the Mario Vargas Llosa Archives at Princeton University, and in identifying the materials we wanted to reproduce in this volume. We also thank Rosario de Bedoya, Mario Vargas Llosa's personal assistant, and our good friend, for responding to so many of our practical queries and facilitating so many of our requests. She arranged for Juan Pablo Murrugarra to take the picture of Szyszlo's painting from a private collection in Lima, and secured Mario Vargas Llosa's permission to reproduce images from one of his working notebooks. In the final stages, Alison Tickner was instrumental: she went over the book with a fine-toothed comb, and helped us to improve it, thanks to her efficient editing and thoughtful queries. We also acknowledge the grants we received from the University of Warwick and from UCLA's Academic Senate to facilitate many of the costs involved in producing the manuscript.

## CHRONOLOGY

Unpublished and untranslated works appear in roman typeface within quotation marks.

- 1936 Born on 28 March in Arequipa, Peru to Ernesto Vargas Maldonado and Dora Llosa Ureta. Dora is abandoned by Ernesto Vargas when five months pregnant. Oscar R. Benavides is President of Peru.
- 1937 Moves with maternal family to Cochabamba, Bolivia, where he attends the La Salle elementary school.
- 1945 José Luis Bustamante y Rivero is elected President of Peru.
- 1946 Moves to Piura, Peru with his maternal relatives. Attends the local La Salle elementary school.
- 1947 Ernesto Vargas re-establishes relationship with Dora Llosa. Moves to Lima.
- 1948 General Manuel Odría overthrows Bustamante y Rivero to govern Peru for eight years.
- 1950 Attends Leoncio Prado military academy until 1952.
- 1952 Returns to Piura, attends San Miguel public high school, begins writing for local newspapers, and directs his own play, 'La huida del Inca' ('The flight of the Inca') at the Variedades Theatre.
- 1953 Returns to Lima to study law and literature at the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos.
- 1955 Marries Julia Urquidi, publishes first short stories, writes for *El Comercio* newspaper, and *Turismo* and *Cultura Peruana* magazines; works as news director for radio station Panamericana.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1957 Wins short-story contest organised by the *Revue Française* with 'El desafío' ('The dare').
- 1958 Receives bachelor's degree in literature from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos in Lima. Visit to Amazonian jungle provides material for *The Green House* (*La casa verde*), *La Chunga* (*La Chunga*) and *The Storyteller* (*El hablador*).
- 1959 Obtains Javier Prado Fellowship to pursue a doctorate at the Universidad Complutense, Madrid. Short-story collection, *Los jefes* ('The Leaders'), wins Leopoldo Alas Prize (Spain). Moves to Paris, where he teaches Spanish; works as a journalist. Cuban Revolution.
- 1962 Receives Biblioteca Breve Prize for his first novel, *The Time of the Hero* (*La ciudad y los perros*), based on Leoncio Prado military academy experiences. Fernando Belaúnde Terry elected President of Peru.
- 1963 *The Time of the Hero* published, receives Crítica Española Award. Copies of *The Time of the Hero* burned in Leoncio Prado parade ground.
- 1964 Returns to Peru; divorces Julia Urquidi.
- 1965 Travels to Havana, Cuba, to participate in the jury of the Casa de las Américas Prize. Marries Patricia Llosa in Lima. The couple return to Paris.
- 1966 *The Green House*. Invited to World Congress of New York PEN Club. First son, Alvaro, born in Lima. The family settles in London.
- 1967 Awarded the Rómulo Gallegos Prize for *The Green House*. *The Cubs* (*Los cachorros*). Second son, Gonzalo, is born.
- 1968 General Juan Velasco Alvarado overthrows Belaúnde Terry in Peru, establishes a military government, ushering in agrarian reform in Peru.
- 1969 *Conversation in The Cathedral* (*Conversación en La Catedral*) and *Carta de batalla por Tirant lo Blanc*. ('A declaration of battle in favour of Tirant lo Blanc').
- 1970 Moves to Barcelona.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1971 *Historia secreta de una novela* ('Secret history of a novel', on the gestation of *The Green House*) and *García Márquez. Historia de un deicidio* ('García Márquez: history of a deicide'). Involvement in the Padilla case will mark end of his good relations with the Cuban Revolution.
- 1973 *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* (*Pantaleón y las visitadoras*).
- 1974 Daughter, Morgana, is born.
- 1975 *The Perpetual Orgy: Flaubert and Madame Bovary* (*La orgía perpetua. Flaubert y Madame Bovary*). Elected to Academia Peruana de la Lengua. Co-directs film version of *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* in the Dominican Republic.
- 1976 Elected President of the International PEN Club.
- 1977 *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* (*La tía Julia y el escribidor*). Takes up Simón Bolívar Chair at Cambridge University.
- 1981 *The War of the End of the World* (*La guerra del fin del mundo*), *The Young Lady from Tacna* (*La señorita de Tacna*), *Entre Sartre y Camus* ('Between Sartre and Camus'). Produces and directs television programme, *La Torre de Babel* ('The Tower of Babel'), in Peru.
- 1981 Awarded Medal of Honour by the Peruvian Congress.
- 1982 *Kathie and the Hippopotamus* (*Kathie y el hipopótamo*).
- 1983 Participates in the Uchuraccay Commission at request of Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde inquiring into massacre of eight journalists.
- 1984 *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta* (*Historia de Mayta*).
- 1985 Awarded Legion of Honour by French Government. *La Chunga*.
- 1986 *Who Killed Palomino Molero?* (*¿Quién mató a Palomino Molero?*) and essay collection, *Contra viento y marea* ('Against wind and tide') (vol. I: 1962–72, vol. II: 1972–83).
- 1987 *The Storyteller* (*El hablador*). Becomes leader of Movimiento Libertad; opposes nationalisation of Peruvian financial system proposed by President Alan García Pérez.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 1988 *In Praise of the Stepmother (Elogio de la madrastra)*. Founds Movimiento Libertad political party in Peru; allies with other political parties forming Frente Democrático (FREDEMO).
- 1989 Runs for President of Peru on the FREDEMO ticket.
- 1990 Publishes the third volume of *Contra viento y marea* (vol. III: 1964–88) and a collection of literary essays, *La verdad de las mentiras. Ensayos sobre la novela moderna* ('The truth of lies: essays on the modern novel'). On 10 June is defeated by presidential candidate Alberto Fujimori. Returns to London.
- 1991 Fellow at Wissenschaftskolleg (Institute for Advanced Study), Berlin.
- 1992 Alberto Fujimori suspends the Peruvian constitution with support of Peruvian military.
- 1993 *Death in the Andes (Lituma en los Andes)*, *A Fish in the Water (El pez en el agua)* and *El loco de los balcones* ('The madman of the balconies'); wins Planeta Prize, Barcelona. Acquires Spanish citizenship while maintaining Peruvian citizenship. Awarded Order of Arts and Letters by French Government (Commander).
- 1994 Elected to Real Academia Española (Spanish Royal Academy). Wins Cervantes Prize, Spain.
- 1995 Receives Jerusalem Prize.
- 1996 *La utopía arcaica. José María Arguedas y las ficciones del indigenismo* ('The archaic utopia: José María Arguedas and the fictions of indigenismo'), *Making Waves* and *Ojos bonitos, cuadros feos* ('Pretty eyes, ugly paintings').
- 1997 *The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto (Los cuadernos de don Rigoberto)* and *Letters to a Young Novelist (Cartas a un joven novelista)*.
- 1998 Receives the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Making Waves*.
- 1999 Visits Dominican Republic for research on dictator Leónidas Trujillo.
- 2000 *The Feast of the Goat (La fiesta del Chivo)*.

## CHRONOLOGY

- 2001 *The Language of Passion (El lenguaje de la pasión)*. Awarded Doctor Honoris Causa by the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, his alma mater. Receives Order of ‘El sol del Perú’, highest distinction awarded by the Peruvian government.
- 2002 Elected President of International Foundation for Liberty.
- 2003 *The Way to Paradise (El paraíso en la otra esquina)* and *Diario de Irak* (‘Iraq diary’).
- 2004 *The Temptation of the Impossible: Victor Hugo and Les Misérables (La tentación de lo imposible. Víctor Hugo y Los miserables)*.
- 2005 Receives Irving Kristol Award from American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research in Washington, DC.
- 2006 *The Bad Girl (Travesuras de la niña mala)* and *Israel/Palestina. Paz o guerra santa* (‘Israel/Palestine: peace or holy war’).
- 2007 *Touchstones. Odiseo y Penélope* (‘Odysseus and Penelope’)
- 2008 *Al pie del Támesis* (‘On the banks of the Thames’), *Wellsprings* and *El viaje a la ficción. El mundo de Juan Carlos Onetti* (‘The road to fiction: Juan Carlos Onetti’s world’).
- 2009 *Las mil noches y una noche* (‘The thousand nights and one night’).
- 2010 Awarded Nobel Prize in Literature 2010. *The Dream of the Celt (El sueño del celta)*.
- 2011 In the run-off for the Peruvian presidential election, he supports Ollanta Humala against Keiko Fujimori, the daughter of the imprisoned former president, Alberto Fujimori. Humala wins the election.