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.
For Fernando de Szyszlo
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of contributors</th>
<th>page ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronology</td>
<td>xiii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction

1 Reality and rebellion: An overview of Mario Vargas Llosa’s literary themes

ALONSO CUETO

2 The early novels: *The Time of the Hero* and *The Green House*

GERALD MARTIN

3 The total novel and the novella: *Conversation in The Cathedral* and *The Cubs*

EFRAÍN KRISTAL

4 Humour and irony: *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service* and *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter*

MICHAEL WOOD

5 The historical novel: *The War of the End of the World*

JUAN E. DE CASTRO AND NICHOLAS BIRNS

6 Innocence and corruption: *Who Killed Palomino Molero?* and *The Storyteller*

FIONA J. MACKINTOSH
## CONTENTS

7 The political novels: *The Real Life of Alejandro Mayta* and *Death in the Andes*  
DEBORAH COHN  

8 The erotic novels: *In Praise of the Stepmother* and *The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto*  
ROY C. BOLAND  

9 The dictator novel: *The Feast of the Goat*  
CLIVE GRIFFIN  

10 From utopia to reconciliation: *The Way to Paradise*, *The Bad Girl* and *The Dream of the Celt*  
EFRAIN KRISTAL  

11 The essays  
JOHN KING  

12 The memoir: *A Fish in the Water*  
KELLY AUSTIN  

13 The plays  
EVELYN FISHBURN  

14 Film and the novels  
CAROLINA SITNISKY  

15 An interview  
EFRAIN KRISTAL AND JOHN KING WITH MARIO VARGAS LLOSA

Further reading  
General index  
Index of selected fictional characters  
Index of selected works by Vargas Llosa  

© in this web service Cambridge University Press  
www.cambridge.org
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).


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.


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).


FIONA J. MACKINTOSH is a Senior Lecturer in Latin American Literature at the University of Edinburgh. She has a particular interest in Argentinean 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.

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.


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.
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)*.


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.


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.


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.


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  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*).


1987  *The Storyteller* (*El hablador*). Becomes leader of Movimiento Libertad; opposes nationalisation of Peruvian financial system proposed by President Alan García Pérez.
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.


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*).
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’).


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.