The Time of the Hero Study Guide

The Time of the Hero by Mario Vargas Llosa

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

One of the greatest Latin American novelists of the twentieth century, Mario Vargas Llosa belongs to a group of writers who brought Latin American fiction out of the regionalist doldrums of the nineteenth century to the attention of the world. This group includes Jorge Luis Borges, Gabriel García Márquez, Julio Cortazar, and Carlos Fuentes. Vargas Llosa, sometimes referred to as the national conscience of Peru, has made a career out of adapting personal and historical events, without bothering about accuracy, to the novel using highly sophisticated techniques of nonlinearity and multiple viewpoint.

His first novel, winner of the Premio Biblioteca Breve (1962) and Premio de la Critica Espanola (1963), *La ciudad y los perros* (literally "the city and the dogs" but published in English as *The Time of the Hero*) made use of his own experience at the Leoncio Prado Academy. The novel was so accurate in its portraiture of the academy that the academy's authorities burned 1000 copies and condemned the book as a plan by Ecuador to denigrate Peru. Such a reception guaranteed the book's sales but its content made it the greatest Latin American novel of adolescence: It is the story of young Peruvian males in their transition to manhood.

The Time of the Hero tells a tale of murder: a squealing cadet must be silenced by a gang called The Circle. The reasons given by The Circle, as well as the rationalization of the authorities to excuse the death as an accident, reveal the process of forming boys into men in a world dominated by the military. The academy does not teach fundamentals; it teaches boys how to exist in hierarchical commandstructures and to never, ever squeal. The main characters suffer through a military academy but minor characters portray a non-military route. Although a microcosm of Peruvian society, the novel's themes are universal: masculinity, secrecy, and the military.

Author Biography

Although born in Arequipa, Peru, in 1936, Vargas Llosa spent his early boyhood with his mother, Dora Llosa Ureta, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where his grandfather was the Peruvian consul. Vargas Llosa attended a series of schools and led a normal middle-class boy's life until his parents reunited and his father, Ernesto Vargas Maldonaldo, discovered his talent for writing poetry. Fearing for the boy's masculinity, Ernesto moved the family to Lima and sent the boy, in 1950, to attend Leoncio Prado Academy. His two years at the academy formed the basis for a novella as well as his famous first novel, *The Time of the Hero*.

His first work, however, was a three-act play published in 1952 while finishing high school in Piura. For the next few years, Vargas Llosa published short stories in Peruvian literary reviews. He also coedited several journals and attended San Marcos University in Lima where he took courses in literature and law. In 1955, he caused a minor family scandal when he married Julia Urquidi □his aunt. They divorced in 1964.

In 1958, he left for Europe and lived for varying periods in Paris, England, the U.S., and Spain. While in France, Vargas Llosa worked on the manuscript that would become *The Time of the Hero*. This became his first novel in 1962 and won two major awards establishing him as a major Latin American novelist□a stature that would be cemented with his second novel, *The Green House* (1966). During this time, in 1959, he completed a dissertation on Gabriel García Márquez's fiction at the University of Madrid. Also during this time, Vargas Llosa was an intellectual spokesman for revolutionary movements throughout Latin America. This advocacy period ended in 1971 when his criticism of the censorship of artists in Cuba caused him to be ostracized by the Latin American Left. He married Patricia (a cousin) in 1965 and they had three children: Alvaro, Gonzalo, and Morgana.

Vargas Llosa returned to Peru in 1974 and seven years later, *The War of the End of the World* announced his abandonment of socialism. He began espousing free-market democracy and anti-authoritarian liberalism in Peru. He turned down the post of prime minister in the early 1980s to concentrate on writing but the government's plan to nationalize the banks of Peru in 1987 forced him to stand up for his beliefs and protest the plan. Vargas Llosa quickly gained supporters and the government backed down. Fired by this victory, his supporters formed Fredemo, a political party, to champion the ideas of freemarket democracy and individual liberty. Fredemo formed a coalition, Liberty Movement, with two other parties. Together, they nominated Vargas Llosa as their presidential candidate. In 1988, opinion polls showed Vargas Llosa well ahead of his rival, Alberto Fujimori, by more than 2 to 1. However, his support gradually eroded and Vargas Llosa lost. He reflected on this political experience in *A Fish in the Water*.

Not long after the election, Vargas Llosa returned to Spain, where he accepted citizenship. However, he currently spends his time in London.

Plot Summary

The Circle

The Time of the Hero opens at night during a meeting of The Circle□a gang of four cadets in their final year of the Leoncio Prado Academy led by the Jaguar. Their clubhouse is "the windowless latrine" and they are rolling the dice to see who will steal the answers to the chemistry exam. This criminal act sets off a violent chain reaction although The Circle intended only to pass an important exam a mere two months before graduation. Cava, a peasant, rolled the four, meaning he must make arrangements on behalf of The Circle with those cadets on duty to grant him anonymous passage to the academic building. This is easily granted and Cava goes off into the night while Boa and Curly, relieved by the roll of the die, go off to bed.

Later that night, while the Poet and the Slave (forced to take Jaguar's place), who are members of the same section as The Circle, are on patrol. Cava goes forth to steal the exam. While the Poet engages Lt. Huarina in a strange metaphysical discussion away from his proper post, the Slave observes Cava crossing to the academic building. While breaking into the building, Cava accidentally breaks a windowpane he had just painfully removed. As Boa later says, "You have to be stupid to do that" and scared. Cava, as a peasant, was susceptible to both. Grabbing the exam and scooping the shards of glass into his pocket, Cava runs back to the barracks.

The Slave

When the exam's theft is discovered, those who were on patrol that night are confined to barracks until the responsible party confesses or someone squeals. The Slave, whose life has been "sheer hell" due to the abuse rained on him by the section and particularly The Circle, had rarely been free of confinement. Most recently, he sent the Poet to Teresa's house to make apologies on his behalf for missing a date. Because of the exam theft, the Slave has been confined again. The Slave asks the Poet to write a letter to Teresa but the Poet refuses. The Slave, in desperation, decides to squeal. Among the cadets, squealing is the worst crime to commit against fellow cadets. However, as Jaguar reveals at the end of the novel, squealing can be justified if done out of revenge for a comrade but not for the sake of getting a pass. The Slave, fed up with being kept from seeing Teresa, reasons that he has everything to gain by squealing on his tormentors. With such motives, the Slave squeals on Cava to Lt. Huarina and receives a pass.

Unknown to the Slave, the Poet□who had written letters to Teresa for the Slave□decides to take Teresa for himself. Too cowardly to admit this to the Slave, he simultaneously befriends the Slave while refusing to write letters for him. The Poet tries to get the Slave to stop being cowardly but the real coward is the Poet. As the Poet tells Teresa, during the Slave's time of anguish "he thought I was his friend" but the Poet was

really stealing his girlfriend. However, Teresa makes it quite clear she never viewed the Slave as her boyfriend.

When Cava's court-martial becomes expulsion, the Jaguar "almost went crazy afterward but not on account of the peasant, just himself." Since the Jaguar organized his year against hazing when they were first-years, he had become the undisputed ringleader. Therefore, to squeal on any scheme of his was to betray the Jaguar himself. He therefore gathers with his remaining circle to figure out who squealed. But Jaguar already knows; like an animal, he can smell it. He decides to cleanse his section of its weak element once and for all. His Darwinian act stems from loyalty to the group and himself.

The Cover-Up

While on a training exercise, the Slave□who happens to be directly in front of the Jaguar□is shot. Enraged by this act and feeling guilty at having made a move on the Slave's girl, the Poet spills the beans to Lt. Gamboa□he reveals the way the cadets break rules against drinking, smoking, gambling, and sneaking out as well as his theory that The Circle took its revenge. The Slave, says the Poet, did not accidentally shoot himself as the official story academy officials are telling parents says (the doctors made a strictly medical report and neglected to mention that "there's isn't any question about it, he got shot from behind"), but Jaguar shot him. Lt. Gamboa believes him and raids the barracks of the first section to find evidence to substantiate the Poet's claims about rule infraction but no evidence against the Jaguar.

Angered by all the trouble, the Colonel intercedes in the investigation. During the locker searches, all the pornographic writings of the Poet come to light. With these stories in hand, the Colonel blackmails the Poet; if the Poet will withdraw the charge and be a perfect angel, the writings will be burnt. The Colonel then, by referencing the Poet's fantastic writing, tells him that clearly his imagination ran away with him and he dreamed up the conspiracy. Seeing he has no support and no evidence, the Poet agrees to withdraw the charge. Before being released, he is mistakenly imprisoned with Jaguar. They fight and the Poet gets the worst of it. After being ordered silent by Lt. Gamboa, the cadets return to the barracks. Along the way, the Poet begins to doubt himself because the Jaguar appears genuinely surprised that it was the Slave who squealed on Cava. Thus, everyone can believe the official story which labels the Slave's death accidental.

Useless Objectives

Lt. Gamboa, who acted on the Poet's information and turned the barracks upside down during an investigation of rule infraction, is transferred to an out-of-the-way post. Just before he goes, Jaguar confesses to him. He is motivated by self-revelation□ the entire fifth year blames the Jaguar for Lt. Gamboa's crackdown and they shun him. Jaguar accepts this because he refuses to squeal on the Poet, but he realizes how the Slave

must have felt. Lt. Gamboa tells him to forget the whole thing because nobody wants to know: to clear up the death of the Slave would be an attempt at a "useless objective." By this Lt. Gamboa means that, just as in war, when an enemy surrenders you do not kill him because that would be bad economics: "it would be easier to bring Arana back to life than to convince the army it's made an error." Jaguar's epiphany includes the realization that the world of loyalty he created among the cadets was a false and fickle one.

The end of the novel is fraught with ambiguity. The cadets graduate and return home to forget all about the academy. At this point, the unidentified fourth narrator reveals himself as the Jaguar: the legitimate suitor of Teresa who struggled on the streets as an orphan. Jaguar marries Teresa and finds a steady job. The Poet, meanwhile, still melancholy about the academy, chooses someone from the middle class. He intends to marry her after he gets an engineering degree in the U.S. In the end, both the Poet and the Jaguar marvel at how normal life went on without them, as if the horror of the academy means nothing. Moreover, although their insight might have led them to change their views of society, each happily resumes his designated place; the Jaguar becomes a lowly functionary, while the Poet takes his place in the upper class. Worse, the Poet, using a metaphor repeated throughout the novel, "could remember many of the events as if they were a motion picture, and for days at a time he could avoid thinking of the Slave."

Characters

Mr. Arana

Mr. Arana differs from Alberto's father only slightly. He does not treat his wife well, abandons her for stretches of time, and has many girlfriends. He is an absent father to Ricardo, the Slave, and blames his wife for Ricardo's fault. When Ricardo has been shot and lies dying in the hospital, Mr. Arana moans to Alberto about the challenge he has had to face in making Ricardo a man: "It hasn't been easy to make a man out of him. He's my only son." Mr. Arana wants to believe the Academy did him good, that it undid all that his wife and Aunt Adeline did to emasculate young Ricardo. Mr. Arana does everything but consider his role in Ricardo's upbringing, especially his failure to ever appreciate Ricardo. In fact, Mr. Arana constantly insulted Ricardo as if he were not there, saying, "he acts like a girl." Mr. Arana represents the worst kind of father.

Ricardo Arana

Ricardo, in terms of the *machismo* of Peruvian society, is a degenerate. Faced with the bravest boy in grade school, "he was not afraid. . .all he felt was a complete discouragement and resignation." From this moment on, Ricardo adopted a humble and subservient attitude and employed passive-aggressive strategies with his father and other macho performers. This personality wins him the designation of Slave by the Jaguar, who makes use of his natural subservience.

Ricardo's inability to play silly games and to feel fear of his fellow humans as well as his desire to protect his mother from his misogynistic father mark him as someone destined to die. Ricardo makes men aware of the fallibility of their *machismo* behavior. Thus, Ricardo carries incredible symbolic weight and can be interpreted according to many patterns. Ricardo represents the existentialist stranger, the man who speaks the truth in Plato's cave. As in that parable, he must die. Ricardo can be read as a Christ figure who dies for the sins of the boys at the hands of their high priest. His death serves as a possible means of salvation for those willing to reflect. However, Ricardo's death does not bring salvation but allows the boys to continue to play at being men.

Arrospide

Arrospide, a rich white kid from Miraflores (like Alberto), intends to survive the Academy with good marks and in good standing with his peers. Based on these goals, Arrospide willingly accepts the thankless role of Brigadier of the first section for all three years. He allows The Circle liberty and simply goes with the flow. In the end, he leads the coup against the Jaguar with relish. By destroying the Jaguar, whether or not the rumor Curly started is true, Arrospide becomes the leader of the first section in name and spirit just in time for graduation.

The Boa

See Valdivieso

Porfirio Cava

"Cava had been born and brought up in the mountains, cold weather was nothing new to him; it was fear that was giving him goose pimples." The fear stalking Cava is the fear of failure both to please the Jaguar and to survive the academy; it is the fear of being unable to handle a situation forced upon him. If he doesn't survive the academy, he is destined to live the life of a peasant. If he does survive, he hopes to climb the social ladder however slightly through a career in the military. Fate is against him in the most iconographic sense□he rolls the dice and lands a "four." "Get going," the Jaguar commands. Cava must steal the answers to the upcoming chemistry exam for the other three members of The Circle and for whoever else wants to buy them.

Cava, an Indian, wins respect by being a part of The Circle. Thus, even an avowed racist like the Boa forgives him for being Indian and befriends him. Cava plays the role of The Circle's peddler in the section. He arranges the selling of items stolen from other cadets in other sections to fellow cadets who want to pass inspection. Cava has a special hatred for the French teacher, Mr. Fontana. Consequently, Cava makes French class hell for Fontana. He thinks Fontana is gay and relentlessly disrupts class. The Boa and the other cadets both approve of and follow Cava's lead.

Curly

A member of The Circle who partakes in the gang bangs and acts of bestiality described by the Boa. He witnesses the Jaguar's vow, "if I get screwed, everybody gets screwed." Upon this basis, the section labels the Jaguar a squealer when Gamboa ransacks the barracks for misdemeanors.

Alberto Fernandez

One of the protagonists, Alberto, earned his nickname when he began writing letters and pornographic stories for money. The Poet shares his origination from a comfortable white middle-class family in Miraflores with the brigadier, Arrospide. However, inside the academy, such a background does not mean much. Only the esteem of one's fellow cadets brings merit. Along with being a narrator of his own life and contemporary events, the Poet brings about the major event of the novel by underhandedly pursuing his friend's girl. While he does not find Teresa beautiful, the Poet admires her intelligence and enjoys the attention she gives him. It is the attention a poor girl gives to anyone sporting the equipage of a higher station in society.

The Poet, as the most conscious and articulate character, receives the most scrutiny because he is the most revealed. Consequently, the evidence never substantiates his claim on reliability and masculinity. This uncertainty begins with his introduction when he confusingly attempts to mislead and seek advice from a man he does not respect, Lt. Huarina. Again and again, the Poet will behave in a manner that clashes with the code of honor and *machismo* he is supposed to be learning. For example, real men brag about sexual exploits that they actually have. Instead, both in his pornographic writing and when he talks about the prostitute, Golden Toes, "no one suspected that he knew about [Golden Toes] because he repeated anecdotes he had been told and invented all kinds of lurid stories." Pained adolescence and the demands of military *machismo* excuse such lying behavior, but for the Poet they become a habit that spills into civilian life.

At his duplicitous worst, the Poet never corrects the Slave in his idea that the two of them are friends. Instead, the Poet tries to make a man of the Slave and hides the truth about his relations with Teresa. This act of cowardice haunts him when he is forced to console the Slave's father with lies about how great the Slave was. Finally, with such a compromised integrity and tortured by doubt, he cannot challenge Jaguar using truth as an instrument. Indeed, Jaguar easily dupes him with a story just as the Colonel blackmailed the Poet with his pornographic stories. The Poet represents a theory of literature stories change and make up reality until it is difficult to discern what is real and what is story.

Like the Slave, the Poet exists as an existential stranger. He never entirely bends to the wishes of The Circle and they punish him by denying access to the exam answers. Instead of bending to those around him, the Poet deludes himself and others with his stories and letters. He assumes the role of the fool in Jaguar's court or his Cave. He produces the fantasies that distract and amuse the cadets and, in return, the Poet is unharmed. He serves his purpose but it is without purpose. When Alberto finds purpose love, friendship, truth it is too late because he has cried wolf too many times with his stories. In fact, Alberto is not even sure if he believes that Jaguar killed Ricardo.

Lieutenant Gamboa

Lieutenant Gamboa represents the ideal soldier. All the cadets stand in awe of him. He is their role model. His notion of justice and military propriety is based on the book of regulations that he has memorized. His attempt to enforce those regulations when the Poet squeals brings him exile in Juliaca.

Flaco Higueras

Flaco, known as Skinny, is a thief who helps Jaguar help his mother with household expenses. Skinny also teaches Jaguar how to survive in the world of *machismo*.

Lieutenant Remigio Huarina

Among the cadets and officers, Huarina fosters little respect. "He was small and weak, his voice when he gave commands made everyone laugh." In addition, his punishments are arbitrary; Huarina invented "the punishment lottery" by which cadets are randomly punished depending on where they stand in formation. In the black and white world of the military, nobody respects arbitrary gray.

When the Slave decides to stand up to the world, he goes to Huarina and squeals on Cava. Huarina seizes the information with enthusiasm hoping that he will win some respect. Huarina gains in standing and represents the classic situation of the victory of the undeserving. Gamboa, the man with the most integrity, gains exile□Huarina, a promotion.

The Jaguar

Central and South American ranchers mistakenly view the largest member of the American cat family, the endangered jaguar (once honored as a god among pre-Columbian Peruvians), as a pest. They believe that the jaguar eats their cattle, scientific evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. A forest and savanna creature, the jaguar wears a coat ranging from yellow to rust red with black rosettes. The jaguar is a fitting namesake for the story's most powerful and mysterious personality.

The Jaguar works in the shadows as his stalking of Cava shows from the start. Cava, when returning from his hunt, sees "a dark shape loom[ing] up in front of him." The Jaguar, with "big pale feet with long dirty toenails" and hands "like two white claws," takes Cava's prey, the exam answers. Such characteristic actions prompt Boa to say "the devil must have a face like the Jaguar's, the same kind of smile, the same sharp horns." But it is the Jaguar's laugh that really gets people.

The Jaguar's effort to make men out of his fellow cadets is done, as all evil intentions are, for his own benefit. Therefore, he represents the manmaking tool that parents believe resides inside the academy. However, the Jaguar□and the parents behind him□never realize that boys like Alberto and Ricardo must act for themselves, find their own identities and their own manhood. It was the Jaguar's paternal impatience, more than any thing else, that made him confess to being the cause of Ricardo's death. According to the Jaguar, "we" all killed him.

Marcela

Like Helena, the young woman who dumps and humiliates Alberto, Marcela is a member of Alberto's social class. Cementing the idea that Alberto willingly imitates his Don Juan-esque father, Marcela is an anagram for the name of Alberto's mother, Carmela. Marcela signifies that Alberto will occupy an important position in Peruvian society like his parents and his grandparents.

The Negro

See Vallano

The Poet

See Alberto Fernandez

Skinny

See Flaco Higueras

The Slave

See Ricardo Arana

Teresa

Within the masculine discourse of the barracks, there are two types of woman. The first, Golden Toes, is the whore upon whom the aspiring soldier can practice his lust. The other is the virgin. Teresa represents the virgin who is to be protected in times of war and maintained by a proper husband in times of peace. The Slave, the Jaguar, and the Poet compete for the love of Teresa. Thus, although she simply goes to school, works, and cleans house, Teresa is a major moving force in the novel and in the world of boys. Teresa also allows for an examination of class in Peruvian society; the Jaguar wins her hand at the end, thus allowing him to move up the social ladder and occupy a position as a clerk in a bank.

Valdivieso

In South America, the largest of the boa or boidae, the anaconda, are known to measure twenty feet. Legends have grown up about boas and the people of the Amazon basin are wary of the creatures. The character Boa is named for this South American reptile. A snake can also symbolize the phallus. The Boa, who has a "huge body, a deep voice, a shock of greasy hair over a narrow face," embodies the animal nature of young males and their awakening sexual preoccupations. He always wins the puerile physical contests the first section holds to pass the time□especially masturbatory races judged by Paulino. In terms of the novel, the Boa represents the perfect cadet: his irreproachable loyalty and physical abilities makes him an ideal soldier; his lackluster intelligence enables him to follow orders; and his genuine love of life make him a pleasurable person to live with. Even though he is a narrator, beyond the Boa's reflections on life in the Academy he does not move the plot. Instead, he tells

readers about previous actions The Circle, of which he is a prominent member, has choreographed and he also recounts the physical exploits of other cadets.

The Boa expresses the racism of Peruvian society through his comments on Indians and peasants. He tells how he had to make an exception for Cava□an Indian from the mountains□with great difficulty. Otherwise, the Boa regards blacks, Indians, or mixed breeds as inferior. The Boa, as his name suggests, is an animal. He has sex with chickens and then roasts them. He cruelly manipulates a dog's affections and even maims the animal for disturbing him during an inspection. Just like a snake, he never quite accepts the Jaguar as his master and often fantasizes about killing him□ stealthily as would a snake. However, the Jaguar has tamed him as a charmer tames a snake, using the tune of violence. The Boa, at his most eloquent, recollects the fights The Circle has engaged in with the Jaguar at the lead.

Vallano

Unlike Cava, Vallano, a black cadet, cannot escape the overt racism of the lighter-hued Peruvians. They call him "The Negro" and describe him in stereotypical fashion, saying, "like all Negroes, you can tell it from his eyes, what eyes, what fear, what jumping around" or, the oft-repeated, "who can trust a Negro." With such a name, a physical name not unlike the animal names, it is not surprising that Vallano is a sympathizer of The Circle although he is not a member. Still, they recognize the Negro as the only "real" student. For this reason, the Poet deals with him as often as possible. The Poet, after the Jaguar turns him down, offers a few letters for a certain number of points on the chemistry exam. During the exam, Vallano is the only student described as working through the questions.

Vallano makes a huge contribution to the culture of the Fifth Section when he brings a pornographic story back from town. *Eleodora's Pleasures* becomes the favorite reading of every member of the section. When Vallano started the story out he found himself out of business because the Poet started selling his own stories. From that moment on, pornographic tales become an intrinsic and sophisticated component of life in the barracks.

Themes

Masculinity

According to Lt. Gamboa, half the boys are sent to the academy "so they won't be gangsters. . .and the other half, so they won't turn out to be fairies. It's their parents' fault." Gamboa's comment leads to a discussion about the difference between soldiers and cadets. Soldiers can be physically beaten until they are so civilized an Indian only appears to be Indian. Cadets, which cannot be so abused, are not quite so accomplished but they do learn one thing: being a man depends on whether a boy is s□□□ or he s□□□. In military terms, the ultimate sign of manhood is murder. However, his parents determine the degree of a boy's success either by letting him grow up□like Tico or Skinny□ or telling him to become a man. Towards that end, parents send their boys to an academy where the boys must negotiate a paradox. They are expected to be soldier-like men but they are not soldiers, they are not killers.

The Slave does not succeed in becoming a man because the deck is stacked against him. He has a nearly Freudian relationship with his mother, indicated by his awareness of her kissing him on the lips: "Why does she kiss me on the mouth?" He learns the hard way that his parents are merely separated and suddenly sees "his mother and a man were. . .kissing." Slave, in undeclared rebellion, refuses to kiss his father. Later, he tries to defend his mother against being beat up. He loses and is unable to fight another man again; he is impotent. Such docility causes his father to send him to the military academy where he hopes they will make "a man out of him." His father blames the mother, declaring, "There's nothing like a woman to ruin a boy's life".

In contrast to the Slave, the Poet does not take his mother's side. He does kiss his father's cheek. Consequently, Poet's father acknowledges him: "He's a man now." Thereafter, Poet imitates his father's attitude toward his mother by neglecting her. The Jaguar is successful because he has no father to compete with and is acknowledged early on as a man. His aunt ensures his success as a man by sleeping with him□s□□□ other people is an essential component of being a man. Skinny helps by teaching Jaguar how to manipulate others and how to fight. All of this helps Jaguar be the man to teach his fellow cadets how to survive. He has only one more step to take: murder.

The Poet tries to help the Slave overcome his docility but instead reveals that what makes him most manly is fear. "But you're a soldier here whether you like it or not. And the thing in the army is to be real tough, to have guts. . . S□□□ them first before they s□□□ you. There isn't any other way. I don't like to be s□□□." Being s□□□ can be literal□as with Boa's rape of chickens, dogs, and a first-year named "fatboy." But it is also metaphorical. The Jaguar's enslavement of Slave□ the Slave does the Jaguar's work□is a form of emasculation.

Masculinity depends on acknowledgment by older men and women of one's manhood. It also depends on the stature a boy can hold among his fellow gang members. Except

for Jaguar, the cadets are in an awkward position. Teresa's aunt echoes the commiseration of Lt. Gamboa: "The Academy!. . .I thought he was a man." However, one can beat that trap since "a man has to accept responsibility for his actions. . ." The recognition of the Jaguar's accomplishment will not come from the gang he formed; it must come from outside. He realizes that and confesses to Gamboa. He is not punished but freed to build a life with Teresa: the surest proof of manhood, the family.

Secrecy

Along with masculinity, secrecy is the most prevalent theme in the novel. From the start, the world of the cadets exists "in the uncertain glow" of a lightbulb. Secrecy is what allows the next generation to form: "The officers don't know anything about what goes on in the barracks." This is natural. Gamboa doesn't seem concerned about his lack of information or about their nicknames even though early in the novel he says, "I know them as if they were my own kids." However, as the Poet continues to tell him what the cadets do in secret and how they exist, this concerns Gamboa. The level of secrecy that marks the culture of the barracks mirrors that of the thieves in Skinny's band. Secrecy maintains the foundation of group loyalty and the foundation of the Academy. Secrecy is supported with physical pressure and taunting.

The Jaguar, the focal point of secrecy, explains all of this to Gamboa. He explains it because he realizes that he no longer needs a group to sustain his personal identity but he does need the understanding of a very well-respected officer like Gamboa. Jaguar realizes this after Arrospide identifies him as a squealer: "You're a traitor, a coward. . .you don't even deserve to have us beat you up." Jaguar realizes there is no gratitude from the group he created. He tells Gamboa the ultimate secret, that he killed the Slave because the Slave was an insult to masculinity, to the section, and to him personally. In response, the exiled Gamboa□the only officer of integrity□sets Jaguar free. The secret is kept because they both know that if the secret were revealed to the Colonel, the Academy would be destroyed.

Friendship

Because of the masculine discourse wherein a man is the s□□□ or the s□□□, the idea of friendship becomes charged with uneasiness and confusion. The intricacies of masculine loyalties betray the finer notions of what being a friend is all about. This begins with Alberto's reminiscences of his childhood. Having been invited to partake in soccer games, his recollections are a series of tales of bravado: broken windows, running from the authorities, having a girlfriend, or negotiating a steep cliff. At the academy, this intensifies. Boa defines friendship by fighting: defending the Jaguar, winning approval, and being tough. The Poet and Slave almost escape this cycle but the Poet, corrupted by barracks discourse, is too homophobic and full of subterfuge. Poet just wants Teresa.

The Slave admits that the Poet has won his confidence: "You're the only friend I've got. . .the only person I like to be with." Such an honest admission makes the Poet uneasy at several levels. Most immediately, it challenges the notions he holds about masculinity: "That sounds like the way a fairy says he's in love with somebody." But the Slave does not allow the discourse of the abusive barracks to intrude. Instead, he continues to be a friend□generous with himself and his cigarettes□ and the Poet enjoys responding. Against his will, the Poet enjoys talking with the Slave without needing to perform with all the *machismo* required by Boa or Jaguar. However, the Poet has learned, from the Academy, that friendship must include pain and, perversely, he clings to this by not telling the Slave about stealing Teresa. Ironically, the only one hurt by the secret is the Poet.

Realizing the value of the Slave's gift, the Poet mourns him openly. Jaguar mourns him too, in his own way. Both young men have tasted genuine humanity in the Christ-like Slave. Poet admits all this to Teresa, proclaiming, "He was my friend." Worse than that, the Slave "thought I was his friend and I" was using him in the same way everyone else used him. The Slave gives self-knowledge to the Poet and to Jaguar. As a result, neither is the same nor are they able to run with the crowd.

Style

Narrative

Excepting a few geniuses—like Joanot Martorell and Victor Hugo whose *Les Miserables* Vargas Llosa read while attending the Leoncio Prado Academy— the novel before Flaubert and Faulkner, according to Vargas Llosa, is primitive. The novels of the nineteenth and early twentieth century carried out the project of realism and naturalism too well. They made the novel serve the function of documentation. Conversely, and Vargas Llosa has written on this many times, the modern novelist uses what the primitive novel documents—feelings, events, facts, etc.—to make art. As he says in *The Perpetual Orgy* "everything depends essentially on form, the deciding factor in determining whether a subject is beautiful or ugly, true false. . .the novelist must be above all else an artist, a tireless and incorruptible craftsman of style." The primitive novelist depended on plot and character to create mystery and suspense. The modernist uses narrative techniques like multiple viewpoints, vagueness, and nonlinear weavings of viewpoints to create a literary world.

In *The Time of the Hero*, Vargas Llosa successfully demonstrated his theory by weaving together four narrators into one plotline. By integrating the voices of Boa, Jaguar, Poet, and Slave, a truer representation of life in the academy forms. By complicating the narrative technique, Vargas Llosa enables the structure of the story to bolster the plot. For example, by failing to identify Jaguar as one of the four, the judging of Jaguar remains impossible until he reveals himself to Lt. Gamboa. In other words, the narrative technique contains the power of the narration in the novel instead of giving it to the reader.

The technique of multiple perspectives utilizes the Faulknerian mode of nonlinear presentation. From the beginning, while the drama of the final two months at the academy unfolds, various flashbacks provide depth to the main characters as well as explanation to the importance of The Circle and the theft of an exam. The Slave has a flashback of moving; the Poet has a similar experience. Then there is a third flashback by an unidentified character which tricks the reader into believing it is either Slave or Poet. This confusion is not cleared up until the end. The confusion disallows an easy judgment of Jaguar. Instead, Jaguar, like Poet and Slave, reflects the environment of his upbringing. Using this technique bolsters the theme of secrecy as well as the confusing labyrinth of information each cadet masters according to the stature they have in their year. Jaguar, as undisputed master, even masters the narrative due to this secrecy as well as the lack of belief about the murder which accompanies his confession. Since the Poet has been favored as nearly a hero throughout the novel, the revelation that the Jaguar is the hero is not believable.

Plundering and Borrowing

In *Temptation of the World*, Efrain Kristal characterizes Vargas Llosa's literary technique "as a kind of amalgam of his own experience, literary works, other genres including cinema, and the research he has done around the world." It is no accident, therefore, that *The Time of the Hero* is rife with allusions and borrowings from other works. For example, a major influence on literature after World War II is existentialism and one novel in particular, *The Stranger* by Albert Camus, had a tremendous impact. Camus' novel concerns a murder committed by a man who found himself in a tense situation, bothered by the sunlight. Similarly, no one who has read Camus can miss the allusion to that famous Algerian murder scene when Jaguar beats a boy up for courting Teresa: "the sun broke into my head." There are obvious differences but the allusion is intentional.

Less recondite, the novel as a whole takes advantage, inexactly, of Vargas Llosa's own life experience. He was actually a student at the same military school. But that is where the resemblance ends. Instead, Vargas Llosa taps into an entire genre of boarding-school literature. Robert Musil's *Young Törless* also has a gang that tortures the weak and ends ambiguously. Another example of borrowing that looms over the entire work is the almost Oedipal family dynamic. Each character succeeds to the extent that he is able to overcome the emasculation his father performs on him. Jaguar's victory depends, in part, on the death of his parents. The Poet has enough personal vitality to negotiate survival in the world outside his mother. The Slave never transitions from the world of the mother to that of the father. This is the source of his slave nature.

Such utilization of other works of art borders on the post-modern. As Vargas Llosa explains in *Perpetual Orgy* , "Imitation in literature is not a moral problem but an artistic one: all writers use, to varying degrees, forms that have been used before, but only those incapable of transforming these plagiarisms into something deserve to be called imitators." The success of the modern novel is its ability to stand on its own while also tapping into literature that is already transcendent of place and time. Camus' *The Stranger* was never confined, as a primitive novel would be, to Algeria and, therefore, allusion to the novel is safe, whereas, allusions to novels read only in Peru would be lost.

Historical Context

Colonialism and Independence

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Lima, known to the Spanish as the City of Kings, served as the transition center for silver mined in the Andes and destined for Spain. With the fall of the Spanish Empire and the expiration of easily extractable silver, Lima declined. In the backcountry, the Indians were locked in a cycle of poverty that began with Spanish rule. Even in the 1990s, Indians form the peasant class of Peruvian society and Vargas Llosa notes a few of them in his book of 1962. The Indians are poor, malnourished, and during the 1990s wracked by cholera. Lima was renewed in the late nineteenth century when guano bird droppingswere in demand due to their high concentrations of nitrogen, which is used in gunpowder. Peru had a huge supply of guano that it mined for the West. Chile, however, took the guano during the War of the Pacific (1879-1884) and Peru had to find other sources of economic sustenance.

Foreign investment helped Peru become a mercantile economy in the first half of the twentieth century. Peru exported copper, sugar, cotton, fishmeal, oil (until that too ran out), and wool. But as an export economy, Peru could not attract investors or create an industrial base. Therefore, much of its natural resources remained untapped; recovering from centuries of colonial exploitation proved impossible. This changed when the Cold War began and the West became interested in Peru. Still, foreign investment and deforestation (a.k.a. economic growth) did not accelerate until the last quarter of the twentieth century.

General Odriá

During World War II, Peru, on the side of the Allies, only declared war against Japan and Germany in 1945 (in order to be a charter member of the United Nations). Peru's willingness to participate in world affairs and the onset of the Cold War brought Peru neo-imperialist attention from the U.S. In 1945, José Luis Bustamante y Rivero won the presidency of Peru representing a coalition of leftist parties including the American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA). Part of their program included land reform for the Indians. This legitimately elected democratic government was not defended by the United Nations or the U.S. when General Manuel Odriá, supported by the oligarchy and military, overthrew them. For eight years, the corrupt and brutal regime of Odriá, who became president in 1950 though his opponent did not appear on the ballot, marginalized the socialist elements and increased defense spending rather than resolve Peru's long-standing problems. During Odriá's reign, university campuses were full of military spies and social mobility was tied to patriotic military service. Odriá's defense spending included an extension of its territorial waters. This move angered the U.S., whose fishing fleet regularly used those waters, but Peru exercised this extension in concert with Chile and Ecuador. The U.S. did little but protest. Peru, under Odriá, also

initiated several cooperative pacts with Brazil. It is in this milieu that Vargas Llosa places his novel *The Time of the Hero*.

In 1956, Odriá allowed elections and lost to Manuel Prado y Ugarteche who had been president during World War II. Ostensible democratic rule continued; real power remained the domain of the forty families who formed the oligarchy with the support of the Catholic Church. During the next open elections, Victor Andres Belaunde won by promising economic reforms. In the meantime, the socialist left had been invigorated by the success of Fidel Castro's communist revolution in Cuba in 1959. It seemed possible to repeat Castro's success throughout Latin America. In 1965, tired of waiting for land reform, 300,000 Indians revolted. In response, the military, no longer willing to stand quietly behind the oligarchy, took over the government. By 1968, a military junta under General Juan Velasco Alvarado created a distinct pattern of Peruvian socialism. The military instituted land reforms. By 1975, the landowning elite had been destroyed and 40% of the land had been transferred to cooperative or peasant use. Economic downturns discredited the junta and Belaunde returned as president in 1980. His attempts to reverse the junta's programs led to widespread protests and the rise of the Shining Path.

Peru's Population

As the heartland of the ancient Inca Empire, it is not surprising to find that the most numerous segment of the approximately 25 million Peruvians is Native American (45 percent). Mestizos, those of mixed European (mostly Spanish) and Indian heritage, make up the next 37 percent. Those who consider themselves white make up 15 percent of the population, and the rest is split mostly between those of African and Japanese heritage. Because of historical circumstances, 90 percent of the people are Catholic, and Spanish remained the official language until 1975, when Quechua joined Spanish as the official languages of Peru.

Economically, heritage means a great deal in Peru. Those who happen to have more European heritage also happen to claim more academic credentials and occupy the highest-paying jobs. These people make up the cream of Peruvian society and speak Spanish as well as another European language. By contrast, the Indians, who often do not speak Spanish let alone another European language, are relegated to peasant status, which borders on serfdom. They labor in agricultural industries or as sweatshop labor.

Just prior to embarking on his life in Europe, Vargas Llosa went on an anthropological expedition, visiting a tribe in the deep jungles of Peru. He was shocked, according to Rossman: "I discovered that Peru was not only a country of the twentieth century. . .but that Peru was also part of the Middle Ages and the Stone Age." He reflected on this disparity in his widely celebrated second novel, *The Green House*.

Shining Path

The plight of the Indian peasants and their unanswered plea for reform found a new champion in the 1980s in the form of a militant Maoist organization, the Shining Path. They laid siege to the government and in the ensuing conflict, some 15,000 people were "disappeared." Meanwhile, Peru's highland during the 1990s became the number- one production source for cocaine destined for the U.S. Alberto Fujimori, who defeated Vargas Llosa in the 1990 elections, used his popularity to assume emergency powers. Using ruthless military tactics in the face of terrorist acts and reprisals, Fujimori's military□with U.S. aid through the War on Drugs program□routed the forces of Shining Path. By 1992, the leader of Shining Path, Abimael Guzman, was in prison and Fujimori continued to pursue free-market economics.

Literary Heritage

Colonial Literature and Independence

Although the conquistadors destroyed the libraries of the Inca, intellectuals of Indian and Spanish descent tried to recover as much as possible of pre-Conquest Peruvian literature. The most formidable of such efforts was undertaken by Garcilaso de la Vega□known as El Inca Garcilaso. By his mother's side he was of royal Inca heritage and Spanish by his father. He put together several volumes of Incan legends in Spanish.

When the Spanish finally left Latin America in 1830, writers dabbled with the techniques of Romanticism before adopting the form of the realist novel as the best vehicle for national literatures. These Spanish American novels, the "novelas de la tierra" or Regionalist novels, describe Latin American landscapes and rural life in exhaustive detail. Examples of such novels include *Dona Barbara* by Romul Gallegos or *The Vortex* by Jose Eustasio Rivera. Once this literature began to mix with indigenous myths and Latin American writers learned about the European avant-garde, a uniquely Latin American literature was born. The first generation of modernist Latin American writers created their techniques in Europe and then returned home. While Latin American modernism was forming, the nationalists were winning the culture wars. Nationalists promoted the regionalist style arguing that modernism was inappropriate.

Modernism

In Europe, the first generation of modernists made contact with each other, the European modernists and the avant-garde. Argentinean Jorge Luis Borges, Guatemalan Miguel Angel Asturias, and Cuban Alejo Carpentier studied the Mayan collections at the Sorbonne in Paris and the British Museum in London. In the former, they met the leading surrealists, Andre Breton and Paul Eluard, and in the latter made contact with the Bloomsbury Group. Other Latin American writers would join this nexus until, finally, Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, and the young Mario Vargas Llosa arrived. As a group, they praised William Faulkner, Marcel Proust, John Dos Passos, Franz Kafka, Gustave Flaubert, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

The heritage of the modern Latin American novel, therefore, sees its origins in the realists and not in the varied forms of the Enlightenment or the Romantics. The primitive novel, whether written by Charles Dickens or Victor Hugo, concerned itself with capturing the events of life. Eventually, the modernists□James Joyce and Virginia Woolf□ revealed a way out. However, it took Flaubert and Faulkner to make use of the pathway and they inspired the generation of writers known as "El Boom," the greatest period of Spanish-language literature since Spain's seventeenth-century Golden Age.

The Boom

Throughout the 1940s Borges announced to Latin America that, contrary to the belief of the nationalists, literary invention is good. This enabled an awakening of creativity. García Márquez wrote under the influence of Borges and Faulkner. In the 1950s, Vargas Llosa had concluded that writing in the primitive, regionalist manner kept the Latin American novel Latin American. Following Borges and García Márquez, Vargas Llosa decided that the novel could be freed of this confinement when it ceased to be Latin American and began to be a literary world independent of the reader's possession of a Latin American experience. The key was to use the narrator and, through narrative techniques, to realize that authors do not record, but create.

Two forces assisted the new energy in Latin American fiction. First, the tough literary agent Carmen Balcells was on the lookout for Latin American fiction. Seix Barral, the most prestigious Spanish-language publishing firm, listened to Balcell. The American publishing house Harper and Row wanted to cash in on the buzz surrounding Latin American modernism and they were helped by a superb translator, Gregory Rabassa. The economic forces combined with the creative juices so that by the late 1950s, the boom began and everyone was reading fiction by Latin American authors.

Critical Overview

After reworking a mammoth 1500-page manuscript, Vargas Llosa found a publisher for *The Time of the Hero* with the most prestigious Hispanic publisher, Seix Barral of Barcelona. When the novel came out in 1963, having already been awarded one literary prize, Vargas Llosa proved that the recent international attention focused on Latin American fiction had not been misplaced. In Latin America, the novel□unlike many internationally acclaimed novels□ was an instant bestseller. Critical reception has been wholly enthusiastic and ranges from appreciation for the subtlety of Vargas Llosa's social critique to his ability to utilize modernist techniques and further "El Boom." Some critics credit Vargas Llosa's novel with moving the boom in Latin American literature into its second wave. Carlos Fuentes heralded the boom with his 1958 novel, *Where the Air Is Clear,* and García Márquez's 1967 novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude,* marked the start of the final wave.

In his acceptance speech for an award for *The Green House* in 1967, Vargas Llosa postulated that the writer is under obligation to help society improve by airing its dirty laundry. He believes that by exposing human failings in fictional form, people can better see what they need to do. As Charles Rossman says in "Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Green House*: Modernist Novel from Peru," Vargas Llosa has always felt this way but *The Time of the Hero* "neither conveys a simple, didactic message nor recommends an explicit course of action." Still, Vargas Llosa's first novel was a huge success and more than verified his authorial theory: he had exposed military culture and they responded in kind.

"One thousand copies were ceremoniously burned in the patio of the school and several generals attacked it bitterly. One of them said that the book was the work of a 'degenerate mind,' and another, who was more imaginative, claimed that I had undoubtedly been paid by Ecuador to undermine the prestige of the Peruvian Army," Vargas Llosa recalls in a *New York Times* article, "A Passion for Peru." While the military was busy vilifying Vargas Llosa, critics were in raptures over the technical, specifically narrative, sophistication of the work. Jose Miguel Oviedo explores the prescience of Vargas Llosa's insight into the role of the military, showing that the author reveals the way in which military life "reproduce[s] itself, deformed and monstrous, on the other side of the social body. What allowed the military to survive destroyed the essence of civilian life, asphyxiating it under the hateful norms of imposition and supremacy that many times have been singled out as great regulators in the narrative world of Vargas Llosa." For Oviedo, the revelation of this insight makes the novel a moral one.

J. J. Armas Marcelo explains how Vargas Llosa uses secrecy as a technique to expose the military hegemony Oviedo sees exposed. Oviedo's two sides of society become, in Marcelo, the world of appearance and the world of secrecy. "These two worlds are within the same forge of the narrative structure of the work, shaping, to a greater or lesser degree, the symmetry or asymmetry of the elements that constitute the novelistic whole." Not only does Vargas Llosa expose military culture but he immerses the reader

in that culture by employing secrecy and ambiguity around the central crime in the novel.

Other critics have picked up on the bipolarity of Peruvian society as presented by Vargas Llosa. The novel, writes D. P. Gallagher, "is never better than when it is showing how for young Peruvians social intercourse presupposes the jettisoning of one's best instincts." Raymond Williams says, "The plot and structure makes inevitable an awareness of Peruvian society and a judgment of the characters' actions." Williams adds that Vargas Llosa's techniques successfully force "adjustments in the reading process to understand. . .temporarily suspending traditional assumptions about" how novels work. Sara Castro-Klaren notes that Vargas Llosa's characterization technique mimics the chivalric tale where characters "often act under an assumed name or a disguised identity." The disguise, subsequently, turns out to be a truer representation of the character's real self. Thus, we remember Jaguar as the kingpin and not as the kind man offering to help an old friend.

Because of the candid way Vargas Llosa has admitted to being influenced by European existential writers as well as writers of the American South, critics have often attempted to make comparisons. Efrain Kristal compares *The Time of the Hero* to William Faulkner's *Light in August*, one of Vargas Llosa's favorites. Like Faulkner, Vargas Llosa's plot hinges on the revelation of "a hidden fact at a particularly timely moment." R. Z. Sheppard says that García Márquez is Faulkner while Vargas Llosa is "aesthetically, if not stylistically, [Peru's] Dreiser" and his first novel "was a brutal slab of naturalism."

There were some negative reviews. Luis Harss and Barbara Dohmann characterize *The Time of the Hero* as obsessively "realist." They view the novel as "a desperate search for wholeness. A sort of vicarious return to the womb of a lost reality." Despite this early review, Vargas Llosa enjoys a positive reputation even though his subsequent works have not been ceremoniously burned. John Updike explains this continued favor, noting that "the Peruvian man of letters, Mario Vargas Llosa, is almost too good to be true; cosmopolitan, handsome, and versatile, he puts a pleasant face on the Latin American revolution in the novel, and. . .makes everybody, even North Americans, feel better about being a writer."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4
- Critical Essay #5

Critical Essay #1

Hubbell has an M. Litt. from the University of Aberdeen and is currently pursuing a Ph. D. in history at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. In the following essay, he explores the way in which Vargas Llosa exposes the construct of military masculinity as it displaces machismo.

The Time of the Hero, with its militaristic anthem and its critical investigation of masculinity, puts one in mind of those stories which support the warrior code. Many early reviews said that the novel was anti-military but only because it showed the messiness behind the uniforms. In point of fact, the novel takes no position on the military□it simply describes how homosocial networks function within the very hierarchical environment of the military and reflect a preestablished hypocritical ideology surrounding the marriage institution. Each example of parenthood shown to us reveals a fractured state of marriage whose affect on the surviving boys is a further denigration of that institution and of women specifically. Vargas Llosa shows how military constructions of masculinity in midtwentieth- century Peruvian culture spill over into civilian life and into the lives of young boys. The gender strategy of the novel is very specific: boys become men insofar as they reject feminine sensibilities, reject the mother who is also resented by the father. In such a divisive domestic atmosphere, the authoritarian nature of the military brings order and regulation first to masculinity and then to the household. Before reviewing the novel for the way in which it explores masculinity molded by the mili tary, it would be instructive to note another highly militaristic culture and its literary component.

One of the major factors that brought about the end of the Great War was the threat of revolution at home. Germany's structural integrity, for example, received a challenge in the form of a working-class colony supported by the remnants of the navy in the north, and various pockets of Polish, Estonian, and Latvian nationalists inspired by Wilson's Fourteen Points and the Russian Revolution. There was also a remaining thread from the Russian Red Army. Chancellor Ebert hired men from the upper class with military training or those who had graduated from military academies and formed the Friekorpsmen to reestablish order□the army was full of the working class and could not be trusted. Their enemies were the disgruntled working classes dissatisfied with the existing order and anyone else who might have caused Germany's defeat. They pursued this goal vigorously from 1918 to 1923 but survived the non-war years to form the core of Hitler's SS. In his 1977 opus, *Male Fantasies,* Klaus Theweleit records his analysis of a cache of novels written for and about the Friekorpsmen in Germany.

The Friekorpsmen were elite soldiers, well trained, and ruthless in their mission. That the German State used force to put itself back together is not the issue but the mentality and identity they created to do this is interesting to anyone seeking to understand military regimes and their impact on gender roles. The Friekorpsmen, as Theweleit finds, are fresh young men (some just out of the academy) "whose 'manhood' was half-brutal and half-comical." They developed a subconscious wherein the communist and socialist women were not to be trusted but assaulted, raped, or just killed. Prostitutes

were a tolerated necessity for letting off steam. The women to be revered and left nearly chaste were the "white women"□women of the upper class (oftentimes sisters) who supported the Friekorps mission and served as their nurses. Such sexual tensions fill innumerable novels written for and about Friekorps adventures. The hierarchical sexual taxonomy of the Friekorps melded well with Nazi ideals but the proposition that Theweleit offers showing that militaristic regimes accompany sexual politics helps us to relate the sexual elements in *The Time of the Hero* to the military manhood being formulated in Peru. Where civilian structures break down or appear to weaken and there is a selfregulating institution capable of resorting to force, that militaristic group absorbs civilian society.

Critic Jose Miguel Oviedo, in "On Vargas Llosa's Intellectuals and the Military," notes succinctly that the military "reproduce[s] itself, deformed and monstrous, on the other side of the social body. What allowed the military to survive destroyed the essence of civilian life, asphyxiating it under the hateful norms of imposition and supremacy that many times have been singled out as great regulators in the narrative world of Vargas Llosa." The relationship, as Vargas Llosa shows, is not a simple one. The political and economic disruption wracking Peru during the twentieth century□ the loss in war or the weak position it holds on the world stage□lead parents to conclude that their boys are in jeopardy of emasculation. Rich parents send boys to the academy and poor parents hope to give their boys more opportunity. Once there, all the psychological tensions the boys have absorbed from their corrupt households□each of the main boys' parents have enormous marital difficulties□is played out on each other.

As with the Friekorps, the military authorities at the Leonicio Prado Academy feel, on behalf of Peru, that their existence is threatened unless they have a strong military force supporting the state. This goes beyond the Colonel's personal battles over the status of the academy. Rather, the military officers believe that Peru is ill-prepared in military terms because its boys are sissies, civilians run the country, and enemies surround the nation. Such is the discussion between Captain Garrido and Lt. Gamboa as the pivotal wargames are being set up. In sum, "it doesn't mean a damned thing to be a soldier in Peru any more." Little do they know that in a few years the military will run the country; for the moment, however, their efforts are achieving results. As if realizing their frustration, during the exercise a weak element among the cadets is eliminated. The cadet known as the Slave is killed because he failed to be a man. The struggle among the cadets over being able to be identified as a man reflects the larger societal tensions.

The other cadets arrived at the Academy as boys, almost women, and were immediately pounced on by the older boys and initiated. The Jaguar, however, "defended them. . .They were scared to death of the initiations, they trembled like women, and I taught them how to be men." The Jaguar taught them loyalty to the group, how to establish a black market, and how and where to have sex□at Golden Toes' who counts off the number of cadets that day and says, "I must be you guys' mascot." The Jaguar enforces group loyalty through cruelty and The Circle backs him up. A continuous example is made of the Slave who is incapable of profiting from the lessons he is offered in masculinity.

The Slave remembers a formative playground moment which seems to belie the Spanish title of the novel, the city and the dogs. He remembers how the other boys would surround him during recess: "their mouths were like fierce muzzles ready to snap at him." The boys shouted at him to "Go on" and cry. In frustration and fear, he did. Once he tried to fight back but his body refused to oblige and he was beaten. Since then he has given up but he sees in the antics of the cadets in the academy to what extremes such pack-like behavior can go. Boys form gangs just like men form armies. To be an integral member of a gang is to be a man.

Meanwhile, the boys carry their abusive mindset into the city where they meet with the approving glances of women and men. They define themselves first in the relationship where they saw their fathers act as men, by neglecting their mothers. Alberto shows happiness toward his mother when she relays money from his father; "his mother had not seen him naked since he had become a cadet." She had not seen him weak or dependent. He performed masculinity in a simple act of shyness. The mother, in response, ministrates to him. At every turn of the transition from boyhood to manhood there must be a woman to mark the progression. Whether it is the old woman who disapproves of Jaguar beating Teresa's friend, Jaguar's sexual initiation at the hands of his aunt, or Teresa's aunt wishing the man calling on Teresa were a real man, a soldier□old women regulate the definition of manhood. This is ironic given that Mr. Arana assumes it is the military that gives that designation. Thus, the brutalization Ricardo experiences in the academy was unnecessary□ he just needed Teresa to love him and he knew that. The world of the dogs will not let him have such an easy life.

A man is formed in the city among the dogs. He becomes a man first to the degree to which he adopts a negative attitude towards his mother and secondly, the degree to which he can adapt and manipulate the politics of whatever group he is in. At first, a boy must master his neighborhood gang. An intensification of this is the military academy. In his interaction with the gang, part of his stature involves the way he interacts with women. On the one hand, he partakes in the traffic of illicit sex so that he can brag about having visited Golden Toes. On the other, he has to have a legitimate love interest. For Jag- uar, Slave, and Poet, this interest is the virginal maiden Teresa who is awaiting rescue from her impoverishment. On the topic of Teresa, the sexual dynamics of masculinity are clearly delineated. Jaguar and Poet dream of being with her but not of having sex with her. In fact, to masturbate the cadets use nasty stories and the images of whores, and should Teresa's face appear they grow ashamed and limp. Boa, the most explicit, says intercourse is "more like a game" where the penis simply tries to penetrate chickens, llamas, fatboys, friends, whores, and enemies.

The parallels between the military elements in Peru and Germany are not exact. Every society with a military complex will have some of the components Theweleit sees in the Friekorps and that Vargas Llosa reveals in his tale about a military academy. The degree of infiltration, however, differs. In Peru, the military plays a larger role than it does, say, in America, even during the buildup of the 1980s when every boy aspired to be Rambo. The point is that in Peru, where hypocritical family members obsessed about the masculinity of their boys rather than fix their corrupted marriages, the military academy was viewed as a curative. The academy was seen as a "reform school" to

which "half of them are sent here so they won't turn out to be gangsters. . .and the other half, so they won't turn out to be fairies." Instead, they turn out to be brutalized men with strange conceptions of loyalty, friendship, and sex, begging for the rigors and authenticity that men like Lt. Gamboa represent. When military dictatorships take over such societies, men such as Alberto or his father are not oppressed but, like the Friekorpsmen, get what they ask for.

The boom in Latin American literature as well as the political turmoil of twentieth-century Latin America have been marked by male perspectives and male dictators. The central theme of *The Time of the Hero* is masculinity or how a boy in Peru becomes a man and what that means. Each primary character experiences molding masculine forces and similarly rejects maternal forces. The novel exposes the way in which masculinity works but no decisive criticism is advanced□that is for the reader to do. Masculinity has several operatives. First, although the principle is rife with irony and qualifi- cations, "a man has to accept the responsibility for his actions." He cannot squeal and he must pull his fair share of the group's weight whether that weight is a theft or a brawl. Second, he must be sexually active while preserving the good woman, his chaste wife. He can sleep around so long as he preserves and protects his family and makes his boy into a man.

Source: Jeremy W. Hubbell, in an essay for *Literature of Developing Nations for Students*, Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay on Mario Vargas Llosa's novel The Time of the Hero (La cuidad y los perros)*, Hilda L. Baker discusses the engrossment of the reader that the novel engenders, and what impact this has both on narrative structure and within literary theories of reader-writer constructed spaces.*

Reading is never a natural and innocent activity. The condition of the reader is to come after, to be constituted as reader by the repertoire of other texts, both literary and nonliterary, which are always already in place and waiting to be displaced by a critical reading.
Jonathan Culler

In literary critical circles, a contemporary author's reputation customarily rests more on his recent works than on his earlier efforts, however well received they might have been. Too often we critical readers forget our initial enthusiasm for a work in our rush to assess more current pieces. We tend to establish hierarchies of quality across the works of a single author and, once such niches are fashioned, to ignore the works that occupy those artificial categories, concentrating instead on the creative publications as yet uncatalogued.

This, in brief, is the regimen to which all novelists, at least in Latin America, subject themselves as they write and continue to write. However, there are reactions to literature, and there are reactions. Of all of the novels published in Latin America since 1960□during the period called the "boom"□no work that I know of has engendered more observable reactions than Mario Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros* (*The Time of the Hero*). Outside Peru the novel was well received, was heralded as a literary happening, and was even awarded a literary prize in Spain where it was published. Meanwhile, some Peruvian readers, especially residents of Lima, were aghast to find in that first edition a street map of their capital city (the setting of the action in the novel) together with a photograph of Leoncio Prado Academy (a prestigious paramilitary school that exists to this day in Lima). These two visual aids, along with the vividly portrayed cheating scandal that comprises the central narrative sequence of the novel, were perceived as nothing less than a brash insult to "the institution." Hence, with zeal worthy of any viceregal Inquisitor in colonial Spanish America, the cadets and officials of Lima's Leoncio Prado burned a pile of these "illustrated" editions in protest.

Those visceral responses to his work must have delighted Vargas Llosa, who remarked during a round-table discussion dedicated to *The Time of the Hero,* "I do not admire novelists who keep the reader at a distance." Clearly, Vargas Llosa's bookburning readers suffered not from excessive detachment from the created reality, but rather from what Erving Goffman terms *engrossment,* "the matter of being carried away into something." Such total involvement in a fictive world calls to mind that paragon of reader-participants, Don Quixote, who destroyed the puppet theater of Master Pedro (Part II, chapter 26) in his zealous efforts to assist damsels in distress (puppets though

they might be). Cervantes' beleaguered knight and Vargas Llosa's incensed readers share a lack of aesthetic distance, that is, "the reader's awareness that art and reality are separate." Yet it is involvement, not aesthetic distance, that is the hallmark of most accomplished narratives. In fact, Vargas Llosa attributes the generic supremacy and the novelist's primary challenge to the possibility of such engrossment: "the novel is . . . the genre that installs the reader at the very heart of the reality evoked in the book. The author's obligation is to keep him there."

My memory of the initial reactions to *The Time of the Hero,* together with my encounters with other texts in the intervening years, prompts this revaluation or re-vision of the novel. I want to focus particularly on this engrossment or involvement, to analyze what I perceive to be essential markers within the work that determine the reader's performance. As I begin the description of the reading process, I am reminded of Clifford Geertz's comment that ultimately critical reading is "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning."

The primary conceptual vehicle for considering this involvement is the notion of framing. Although "framing" is a metaphor appropriated from the pictorial arts, it and its consequences are fundamental to fiction. Boris Uspensky's comments on the frame are useful to our understanding of the organization of a novel and the ways we learn "how to be" readers:

> We may say that the frame of a painting (primarily, its real frame) belongs necessarily to the space of the external observer (that is, of the person who views the painting and who occupies a position external to the representation)□and not to that imaginary three-dimensional space represented in the painting. When we mentally enter the imaginary space, we leave the frame behind, just as we no longer notice the wall on which the picture is hung; for that reason, the frame of a painting may possess its own independent decorative elements and ornamental representations. The frame is the borderline between the internal world of the representation and the world external to the representation.

Following this logic, we can say that the boundaries of the narrative world are marked (and thus enclosed) by the narrator of a novel. Indeed, it is the narrating function that provides the reader with a psychological orientation toward the events recounted therein. However, in fiction the narrator is also the nexus between interior and exterior, between the demands of the created reality and the expectations that the reader brings with him to the act of reading. It is the successful structuring of this frame that induces the reader to accept the norms and premises defining the interior coherence of a novel. What is more important, as Goffman points out, "frame . . . organizes more than meaning; it also organizes involvement."

Though we virtually take it for granted, the title of a novel is often one of the first clues to the quality and direction of the reader's conceptual involvement and properly should be considered integral to the frame of the work. The ultimate meaning of the title, replete with connotations that the work can lend to it, is necessarily completely perceived only after the reading experience. In the case of Vargas Llosa's novel, however, the title provides an essential clue to one of the primary organizational principles in the work, a clue that is deleted from the frame of the English translation. Conversations with the novelist after the publication of this novel reveal that he debated at length over the title (a fact that confirms, to some extent, the importance of even that one line). Initially the work was to be called *La moroda del héroe* (*The Hero's Dwelling*), whence the title for the English translation. Later that was changed to *Los impostores* (*The Imposters*), a more explicitly sarcastic reference to the problems treated in the novel. Finally, the Spanish edition was published with the title *La ciudad y los perros* (*The City and the Dogs*), a phrase, Monegal asserts, that highlights the tension between the characters and their environment (Monegal). Undoubtedly, that is one aspect of the significance of the title. I would suggest that, more than merely communicating a univocal message to the reader, the title as it finally appeared establishes very subtly the basic narrative format of the novel. Spatially, the episodes all occur either in the city or at the academy. The connection between the two major settings (ignoring the subsettings that actually exist within each) is always one of the "dogs," the cadets now in their fifth year who reacted to their third-year initiation into the academy by organizing all manner of subterfuge against the other cadets and the school officials. The term *dog* would normally refer to the third-year cadets, but for the reader it comes to designate the small group of cadets who are involved in the cheating scandal that results in one cadet's death. Essentially, the fictive present includes all of those events that follow chronologically the theft of the chemistry examination (the event that opens the novel), and the central narrative sequence ends with the cadets' departure from the academy. The Epilogue of the novel focuses once more on two of the cadets (Alberto and the Jaguar) after they have left the academy, and affords the only projection into the future, into the lives of the characters beyond the academy.

Not only does the Spanish title circumscribe the spatial aspects of the novel; in its duplicating construction it also hints at the temporal skeleton of the work. In addition to the alternation between those episodes set in the city and those which take place at the academy, there is a corresponding alternation between episodes that advance the central narrative sequence (the cheating scandal) and others that provide social backgrounds for three of the cadets (Alberto Fernández, the Jaguar, and Ricardo Arana). Each of these episodes belongs to a fictive past remote from the central action of the novel. Somehow one expects such background information to provide clues to or causes for the fundamental problems set forth in the novel. But the reader's expectations are not fulfilled, for the details of each cadet's earlier life outside the academy seem to pertain to individuals that hardly resemble those whom we meet inside the academy. Each of the narrations terminates with the youth's decision to enroll at Leoncio Prado: three cadets, and three distinct reasons for subjecting oneself to the discipline and rigors of paramilitary life.

Before I suggest the results of Vargas Llosa's contrapuntal narration, let me specify those units that I am calling *episodes. The Time of the Hero* consists of two lengthy sections, each having eight chapters, and an Epilogue. Heading each of the long sections is an epigraph, which is yet another means of orienting the reader toward the novelistic world. Each chapter in turn is divided into numerous subsections separated from one another by the typographical conventions of blank spaces and (in the Spanish edition) the capitalization of initial words in the following section. Only the last chapter of Part I is of one piece; it recounts the field maneuvers ("war games") during which Ricardo Arana is killed. Two of the chapters (chapter 4, Part I, and chapter 1, Part II) are divided into ten sections each. This organization into episodic sections within the larger chapter divisions facilitates the movement among multiple temporal and spatial settings.

The principal result of such temporal fragmentation is that the reader experiences a constant interplay between past and present, between actors in the primary setting (the academy) and others in the secondary location (the city). Throughout the novel the central narrative provides an axis around which all other events revolve. Flashbacks to earlier moments in the academic lives of these cadets and regressions to childhood memories both reflect the continuing problems provoked for cadets and offi- cials alike by the theft of the examination. Through this contrapuntal rhythm the stress is placed on simultaneity, on the shifting center of the fictive present and the confounding effects of such movement. The ultimate result is the blurring of temporal and spatial categories, the interpenetration of time and space. Sharon Spencer's summary of this process is relevant to the narrative organization of Vargas Llosa's novel:

> The spatialization of time in the novel is the process of splintering the events that, in a traditional novel, would appear in a narrative sequence and of arranging them so that past, present and future actions are presented in reversed, or combined, patterns; when this is done, the events of the novel have been "spatialized," for the factor that constitutes their orientation to reality is the place where they occur.

It should be noted that this structural format and its effects are not unique to Vargas Llosa's first novel. In *The Green House* (1966) and *Conversation in The Cathedral* (1969), this technique achieves its fullest development and becomes almost a trademark of Vargas Llosa's narrative style.

Beyond the title, which simultaneously heralds the reader's involvement and, in this novel, initiates that process, there are other markers that shape and determine reader response in *The Time of the Hero.* At least one critic has noted certain resemblances between this novel and the detective story format; in fact, the work is best viewed in the context of one long literary tradition of the riddle or puzzle. Vargas Llosa refracts, even multiplies, the puzzle format until it not only contributes to the structural frame of the work but also affects the conceptual apprehension and ultimate interpretation of the novel. I would point out that this mystery/riddle/puzzle technique has received mixed responses from critical readers. Luis Harss, for one, regards it as bothersome and

questions the effectiveness of such "seductions" of the reader. Harss goes so far as to assert that "Vargas Llosa has the bad habit of witholding vital information." To his complaint I would reply that this organization and expositional technique is successfully integrated into the system of the narrative world and performs both structural and cognitive functions, both of which contribute to the reader's comprehension of the significance in the novel. In Jonathan Culler's terms, however, my expectations of the work are tempered by a textual repertoire different from that of Harss.

Despite the fact that the initial impetus of the action is a misdemeanor (which the reader "witnesses") that results in the death of Ricardo Arana and prompts the investigation that occupies the second half of the novel, the most significant aspects of the puzzle frame relate only tangentially to those events. Structurally, the work draws on detective fiction but in fact moves well beyond the conventions of that genre. It is important to indicate that even in this little novel the conventions of detective stories, since they should be familiar both to reader and author, serve as another orienting device and lead the reader to expect "an ongoing continuity of values." The detective story frame, however, is relegated to the background about midway through the novel. Thereafter the invention of the work takes over, and the reader is guided through a process that (in any good mystery) would lead to the resolution of conflicts, the answers to persistent questions, and a stabilized outcome favorable to most of the characters.

In *The Time of the Hero,* however, ambiguity and paradox remain unresolved. Rather than being lucid sources of illumination for the reader, the narrators in this novel generate conflicting meanings. Instead of one meaning or one truth, the novel provides clues to a range of meanings and possibilities of truth that call attention to the means by which we each arrive at our own personal worldviews. Ultimately, we are reminded in multiple ways that "imaginative truth" is often "a lie which [we] value."

Returning to the puzzle frame, I want to present two examples of the questions that arise within the first two chapters of the novel, answers to which are only revealed in later chapters. The first concerns the identity of one of the characters, not himself a narrator, but rather an optic through which the reader views a sequence of events in the fictive past. After the initial narration of the theft of the examination, the scene changes to Salaverry Avenue in Lima and the childhood of someone named Ricardo. Until that moment the reader has encountered no character by that name. Nor is anyone revealed to be Ricardo in the section that follows. Among the characters we have met, it could be the Boa, the Jaguar, or the Slave, none of whom has been called by his given name up to that point. Before the end of chapter 1 we can eliminate the Boa (we think), since he performs a narrating function of his own utilizing first-person pronouns. The final identification of this Ricardo is made at the end of chapter 2, when the Slave gives his name as Ricardo Arana.

I would underscore the fact that there is one characteristic of that first episode that persists throughout all of the sections devoted to the Slave. The key to the temporal position of these episodes is to be found in the phrase "El Esclavo ha olvidado" ("The Slave has forgotten") and its variant "El Esclavo no recuerda" ("The Slave doesn't remember"). The latter we find in the section of chapter 1 that details the initiation of the

cadets, told indirectly through the eyes of the Slave before the reader can positively identify him as Ricardo Arana. In a world of shifting narrators and settings, the reader begins to search for connections between the episodes, and an observant reader would probably note the similarity between the two phrases. By the time we are certain of his identity at the end of chapter 2, we have already encountered one oblique indication of Ricardo Arana's schoolboy nickname.

Each of the sections concerning Ricardo begins with the phrase "The Slave has forgotten" (my translation), which, by virtue of its recurrence, becomes part of the narrative frame. (In a like manner, those episodes dealing with Alberto's childhood tend to include an early reference to Diego Ferré Street, and thus promote the reader's orientation within the narration.) It is interesting that one element of this framing device does not survive the translation process. Semantically, the frame remains unchanged; syntactically, it is altered. The translator chooses to maintain the narrative past tense in English and thereby deletes the verbal aspect of the phrase. (Compare "The Slave *has* forgotten," my translation, with "The Slave *had* forgotten," copyrighted translation.) What always follows these present-tense assertions by the omniscient narrator is a past-tense account of Ricardo's childhood. What, then, is the vantage of this narrator? There must be something in the fictive present that permits him such statements as preludes to past narrations. The last episode in Ricardo's childhood recounts the day his parents announced their decision to enroll him at Leoncio Prado. That section is in the same chapter (Part II, chapter 1) in which the other cadets learn of the Slave's death. The end of his childhood memories coincides with his premature death at the academy. Therefore, if we maintain the introductory phrase in its present tense, the collective memories take on the repetitive qualities of a litany, a linguistic device that blends with the ongoing narration and still provides reinforcement of the cadet's death.

The second riddle, one which for many readers is unsolved until the Epilogue, is the identity of the narrator who is the friend of Skinny Higueras and is always around Bellavista Plaza. We encounter this first-person narrator in chapter 2, Part I. What we learn about him in this initial section is that he has a brother, that his father is dead, and that he studies with a girl friend named Tere. Again, a process of elimination is put to work, and we recall that, given the characters we have met, this person could be the Boa (unlikely) or the Jaguar. By this stage in the novel, however, it is clear that Alberto is to be one of the principal figures, and certain intuitions (perhaps a desire to give him a voice of his own instead of hearing him through the mediating omniscient narrator) lead us to suspect that these passages may be yet another view of Alberto's childhood. Conflicting information should allow the reader to eliminate this possibility by chapter 5 of Part I. This narrator's father is dead; Alberto's is not. The confusion is promoted by Alberto's involvement with Teresa. Are there two Teresas? Unlike the accounts of Ricardo and Alberto's childhood (both narrated in the third person), this account continues well into Part II of the novel. The final installment in this third series of flashbacks is in chapter 7, Part II. Like the other two, this series also terminates with the narrator's decision to enroll at Leoncio Prado. Still, no positive identification has been confirmed by information available in other sections of the novel. The reader can only surmise who this narrator might be. The Epilogue solves the riddle unequivocally; in fact, the answer is in the very last section of the novel. The Jaguar and Skinny Higueras

are once again together, reviewing each other's experiences. This time the narration is third rather than first person, and the Jaguar's name is mentioned near the beginning of the section. The pieces fit; the problem is solved. Yet the solution to the narrator's identity only highlights how little these accounts of childhood experiences actually contribute to our understanding of the cadet's conduct within the academy. The vital information, which in a detective story would set one's mind at rest, only renews□even heightens□the reader's perplexity in *The Time of the Hero.*

For observant readers, however, this narrator's identity should come as no surprise. There are at least four clues lodged in other sections of the novel, minor details which, taken together, establish rather clearly that Skinny Higueras' friend is the Jaguar. First, Alberto admits at one point that he attended La Salle Academy before he came to Leoncio Prado. The first-person narrator reports seeing the La Salle students on the street one day. This narrator could not be a La Salle student, therefore not Alberto. Second, Alberto is from Miraflores (an upper-class suburb of Lima) while the narrator seems to be from Bellavista. We can thereby eliminate Alberto. (Now the reader's task changes from elimination to confirmation.) Third, the Boa remembers that the Jaguar once said that he was from Bellavista, and in the same breath comments that the Jaguar uses his head and feet to fight. Fourth, the description of the Jaguar during the initiation emphasizes his fighting style (head and feet). The firstperson narrator reveals that his brother taught him to use his head and feet to fight.

Such a detailed inventory of clues and counterclues might seem to digress from the central concern of framing and involvement. But it is precisely the presence of the detective-story frame and its operational modes with which the reader is familiar that encourages this quest for clues.

There is at least one more characteristic of the narrative frame in Vargas Llosa's novel that does not survive translation. I present this because I believe that it may be the key (at least *a* key) to the overt reactions to the publication of the novel in 1962. Earlier I mentioned the liturgical opening of all of the sections that recount Ricardo Arana's childhood. Recall that in Spanish the use of the present tense at the beginning of those passages creates a temporal texture that is absent from the passages cast in the narrative past tense in English. Several critics have noted that tense alternation□ even indiscriminate usage of verb tenses□is a hallmark of Vargas Llosa's style. In *The Time of the Hero,* Vargas Llosa's tense alternation is not at all random or without purpose. There are, in fact, specific instances of narration in the present tense, passages that describe recurrent scenes (dawn and reveille at the academy, chapter 2, Part I) or present elements of the setting that may exist outside of the novel (the description of Diego Ferré Street). In the following paragraph, which is the translator's version, consider the perceptual effects of substituting the present tense which Vargas Llosa himself used, for each of the italicized past-tense verbs:

> Diego Ferré Street *was* less than three hundred yards long, and a stranger to it would have thought it was an alley with a dead end. In fact, if you *looked* down it from the corner of Larco Avenue, where it *began*, you

could see a two-story house closing off the other end two blocks away. . . . At a distance, that house *seemed* to end Diego Ferré, but actually it *stood* on a narrow cross street, Porta. (my emphasis)

Induced to accept the immediacy of the scene by the use of the present tense, the reader accompanies the narrator on a walking tour of Diego Ferré Street, not merely a setting for Vargas Llosa's novel, but rather an apparently "real" neighborhood into which one might venture at any time. In the first edition of the novel, this attitude on the reader's part, or the facilitation of this attitude, was reinforced by the inclusion of the city map. This contrast between verbal tenses establishes the transcendence of the setting and, at the same time, endows the events with a presence and presentness that they might not otherwise display.

The product of this narrative technique is a double-edged sword. Clearly, the reader is drawn into the world of the novel because of this strategy. It also enlists the reader's capacities to visualize, thereby rendering the novelistic space more vivid. However, such a technique also leaves open the possibility of some spatial projection beyond the realm of the novel, beyond the covers of the book or the boundaries of the reader's imagination. For the cadets and officials of Leoncio Prado, the implied resemblance (and explicit coincidence) between Vargas Llosa's academy and their own prompted an indignant public reaction designed (I would assume) to deny any such relationship. Their demonstrated disapproval served more to spotlight than to suppress that social critical possibility.

In *The Time of the Hero*, the success of Vargas Llosa's presentation depends, in large measure, on the careful implementation and integration of familiar structural frames that induce the reader into involving himself in the created reality. The narrative stress patterns established by means of the alternating rhythm create an interface, a zone of significance between two poles of meaning. The reality of the novel is not a Manichean world; neither the reader nor the characters are permitted the luxury of all-or-nothing attitudes, of yes-or-no answers. The reader's involvement points out the existence of growing gray areas, actions that defy categorization, social responsibilities that threaten individuality, and individual behaviors that menace the established social order. The moral and social dilemmas that circumscribe the world portrayed in the novel are paralleled in the reader's experience by the subversion of the initial behavioral frame (the detective story, mystery, or puzzle) that was to guide him through the novel. While the frame overtly involves the reader in the novel, it also covertly affords him the experience of implication and deception that are integral to the social drama comprising the work.

Vargas Llosa manages to station both the characters and the reader in an interstitial, interstructural zone in which we struggle to discern the shadows and specters of behavioral demands that will operate within the world of the fictive academy and, perhaps, could extend beyond the experience of this novel. The narrative frame erected in *The Time of the Hero* is sustained by means of multilevel alternation: third-person narration vs. first-person narration, fictive past vs. fictive present, past-tense verbs vs.

present-tense verbs, the city vs. the academy. Reading Vargas Llosa's novel becomes a retrogressive procedure in which the reader is required to retreat three steps and retrieve lost pieces of the chain of events in order to advance four steps in pursuit of the accelerating action. Frustrating and puzzling though it be, it is the reader's involvement in and response to the operational modes of the work that permit him to perceive its "configurative meaning." As Wolfgang Iser summarizes, the novel is "the genre in which reader involvement coincides with meaning production."

Source: Hilda L. Baker, "'Of how to be and what to see while you are being': The Reader's Performance in The Time of the Hero," in *Texas Studies in Literature and Language,* Vol. XIX, No. 4, Winter, 1997, p. 396.

Critical Essay #3

In the following essay, Roy Kerr examines the narrative structure of Mario Vargas Llosa's novel La cuidad y los perros (The Time of the Hero) *by examining Vargas Llosa's use of the character Boa, whose narration combines generalities and specifics to reveal not only the story of the novel, but aspects of the writer himself.*

All narrative has a minimal pair of essential characteristics: "the presence of a story and a story teller". Narrators assume diverse voices and perspectives in telling their tales. A useful distinction in this regard is between narration in which the narrator is present as a character, and that in which the narrator is absent from the tale. When a protagonist narrates a portion of a work of fiction, part of our notion of his character arises from the perception of him in the role of storyteller. Analysis of a fictive narrator's comments may reveal aspects of the character's personality that remain hidden in the accounts of his actions in the novel.

Mario Vargas Llosa's first novel, *La ciudad y los perros* (1963), has been described as a work in which "Few characters are delineated in any great depth." Nevertheless, two figures, Jaguar and Boa, reveal much about themselves in their roles as narrators in the novel. Their commentaries, com prising about twenty percent of the work, provide refracted yet substantive self-portraits. In the wealth of critical studies devoted to the novel, the figure of Boa generally has been neglected. A review of the statements that he makes as storyteller reveals a characterologic complexity and diversity that merit critical consideration.

Boa Valdevieso narrates thirteen segments of the novel. Initially his monologues provide the reader with scabrous but factual generalizations about cadet life at the Leoncio Prado Military Academy. In detailing specific incidents, such as Cava's abortive attempt to steal a chemistry exam, and Richi's death while on manoeuvers, Boa's visceral reactions serve as an emotional barometer that reflects his function as "una directa emanación de la masa colegial." Valdevieso's disparate narrations thus reveal a careful structuring that combines generality with specificity in a cohesive story unit.

In addition to contributing significantly to plot development, Boa's monologues reveal much about the teller of the tale. At the novel's outset, he is described from outside the frame of his own narration: "un cuerpo y una voz desmesurados, un plumero de pelos grasientos que corona una cabeza prominente, un rostro diminutivo. . . ." Later he is observed in action as a potential buyer of Alberto's pornographic novelettes, and as the lone defender of the beleaguered Jaguar. Almost everything else that the reader learns about his character is gleaned from his own narrative.

For his peers, Boa is epitomized in a word: "bruto." This characterization is corroborated partially by his own testimony. He himself recalls participating in an incident in which cadet Cava rapes and kills a chicken. Later, he confirms his attempt to aid his companions in the sexual assault of a cadet, and reveals that he deliberately broke the leg of his dog.

Boa's worship of the *machismo* code represents another facet of his brutish nature. Although he fears and at times hates Jaguar, he admires him as "un hombre de pelo en pecho." He glories in exertion that causes him to perspire heavily, since "así transpiran los machos." Commenting on the exasperated weeping of his French instructor, Fontana, he reveals that for him, the shedding of tears implies effeminacy: "Y entonces cerró los ojos y cuando los abrió, lloraba. Es un marica." In contrast, instructors who respond forcefully to students, such as Lieutenant Gamboa, are viewed distinctly. After enduring harsh physical punishment ordered by the Lieutenant, the cadet's impression of the officer differs markedly from his view of Fontana: "Gamboa es formidable, ahí nos dimos cuenta de lo formidable que es Gamboa."

Boa's racist commentaries reveal another aspect of his churlish nature. As a *cholo*, he views Whites with scorn: "Los blanquiñosos son pura pinta, cara de hombre y alma de mujer, les falta temple." The *serranos*, Indian mountain peasants, receive even greater abuse. His comments on their attributes form a litany of ignorance and prejudice:

Los serranos son tercos. . . Los serranos son un poco brutos
Yo creo que el colegio le contagió las pulgas a la perra, las pulgas de los serranos.
Los serranos son bien hipócratas. . . .

The cruelty, *machismo*, and racism that Boa's own musings verify as aspects of his nature appear to paint a sordid portrait of a sadistic personality. Nevertheless, the cadet's own words reveal another side of his character, one that contrasts with, and to some extent ameliorates the brutish element. His cruelty, for example, is mitigated by his ingenuous, puerile nature. In this respect, his narrative has been compared to that of "la voz primaria y anormal del Benjy de *The Sound and the Fury*." Symptomatic of his naïeveté is a fear of spirits and goblins. When plans go awry, he rationalizes that "El diablo se mete siempre en todo con sus cachos peludos." He believes that his dog can protect him from ghosts: "me hubiera gustado tenerla a mi lado en la glorieta, para espantar el miedo: ladra perra, zape a los malos espíritus." Additionally, he associates Jaguar's features with a devil: "El diablo debe tener la cara del Jaguar, su misma risa y además los cachos puntiagudos." When causal explanations are lacking, the cadet's reaction is one of superstitious fatalism: "Estaba visto que nadie se salvaba, ha sido cosa de brujería."

Such childlike superstitions and fears are those of an immature or underdeveloped mind that does not always act according to logic or reason. Viewed in this light, Boa's demonstrations of brutality assume a different dimension. He rarely commits premeditated acts of violence; rather, they result from anger, frustration, or from attempts to please other cadets. During the aforementioned attempted rape of a cadet, for example, Boa's monologue reveals that the incident was initiated by Jaguar, Rulos, and Cava. His role, though not laudatory, was limited to the physical restrainment of the victim.

Although he participates in the humilliation of Professor Fontana, his monologues reveal that Jaguar and Cava were the major instigators of these incidents. Boa expresses satisfaction at the baiting, yet feels compassion for the victim: "A veces da compasión, no es mala gente, sólo un poco raro. . . Es un buen tipo."

When he actively participates in violence, such as the maiming of his pet, Boa accepts responsibility for his actions: "Le di la mala, con intención." He likewise expresses sincere regret for his deed: "Es un animal bien leal, me compadezco de haberla machucado."

Valdevieso's prejudice against *serranos*, outlined above, stems from impressions gained by witnessing the results of a beating inflicted upon his step-brother by Indians: "Será por eso que los serranos siempre me han cído atravesados." Despite an inculcated hatred, Boa comes to respect *el serrano* Cava as a friend. Boa, the oaf presumed idiot, is conscious of this radical change in attitude, and chronicles it in his monologue: "Pobre serrano, no era mala gente, después nos llevamos bien. Al principio me caía mal, por las cosas que le hicieron al Ricardo [su hermanastro]." Ultimately, the *cholo* proposes friendship to the Indian: "Y después yo fui hasta la cama del pobre Cava y le dije: 'oye, quedamos como amigos.' Y él me dijo: 'por supuesto'". At this juncture, the brutish cadet transcends his base nature, forming a bond of human affection based upon personal experience rather than on untested stereotypes.

Like many characters in *La ciudad y los perros*. Boa is not what he appears to be at first glance. His peers view him as a brute whose strength and atavistic cruelty are to be feared, respected, or exploited. Were it not for his monologues, Boa's second self would remain as hidden from the reader as it is from the academy cadets. As a narrator who ostensibly directs his comments only to himself or to his dog, he reveals that he can act responsibly and demonstrate affection. Dramatic irony is achieved through the reader's dual perception of Boa's bestial façade together with a glimpse of the isolated cadet who loves his scraggly pet and who remains loyal to Jaguar and Cava.

Prior to its publication, one of the tentative titles proposed for *La ciudad y los perros* was, *Los impostores*. While Boa's narrative provides essential information with regard to plot, the revelation of aspects of the cadet's own personality that surface in his narration also verifies his need to conceal his inner feelings, his hidden self, and to become yet another imposter in the savage environment of the Leoncio Prado Academy.

Source: Roy A. Kerr, "The Secret Self: Boa in Vargas Llosa's La ciudad y los perros," in *Romance Notes,* Vol. XXIV, No. 2, Winter, 1983, p. 111.

Critical Essay #4

Constructed on the basis of an apparently chaotic duality of time and space, Mario Vargas Llosa's novel *The Time of the Hero* could be assigned, as José Promis Ojeda correctly has done, to the "long literary tradition characterized by the presence of the 'enigma.';" Generally, the plot of the novel corresponds to the following episodes:

a) Theft of an exam at a military school (the
Leoncio Prado).
b) Collective punishment. Weekend leaves are suspended
for the cadets in the section in which the
robbery occurred until the thief or thieves should be discovered.
c) Denunciation of the thief by a cadet of his section
before the military authorities of the school.
d) The informer's violent death during military
maneuvers.
e) A new accusation of the presumed assassin by other
cadets before the same military authorities.
f) Pertinent investigation is begun.
g) The investigation is suspended. The military authorities
determine that the cadet's death was an
accident.

But going beyond the simple boundaries of a superficial reading of the plot□in which "the city" and "the school" appear as the central spaces of the narration□other darker, more profound, more functional and more labyrinthine worlds emphasize the ambiguous characteristic of *duplicity* (personal, temporal, conceptual and functional), so that the same characteristic will be the center of contradiction, the grounds for two opposite poles, for two strata that fuse together and split apart simultaneously and constantly during the narrative process. This gives rise to a dual structure which is bipolar, oppositive and presented in a clear process of diminution that will continue fragmenting into two halves, always smaller as conceptual units□those levels that we are discovering and analyzing in the novel.

The *asymmetry* of the formal structure that Vargas Llosa utilizes in the novel has been pointed out with some insistence, as if□on managing as he pleases a great number of technical elements□the arbitrariness of the author exercised complete dominance over it and unbalanced the narrative discourse with marked anarchy. One deduces from this criticism that the author at times loosens the reins of discourse, because the text becomes the master of the situation, because the story itself becomes the agent that forges its own strategy. On the other hand, there are those who point out the constant presence of the author suffocating his creation, the actions of his characters and the way in which episodes and protagonisms are arranged within the novel. Nevertheless, it is here, at this exact point of conceptual confluence, that I see that Mario Vargas Llosa has tried to situate the narrative totality: *between ambiguity and determinism.* This conceptual duality accentuates even more the standard of bipolarity that sums up the

novel at whatever level one tries to arrive at analytical dissection. It is quite possible that, during the first phase of creation, Vargas Llosa did not insist rationally on this twodimensional process, but that the process of creation itself included within its essence the project of rupture with a single, linear dimension.

On one hand, Luis Harss classifies Vargas Llosa as a novelist "stubbornly deterministic and antivisionary," incapable of forcing his characters to overcome those situations which "determine" that his "individuals . . . are lost in the density of their environment. There are no persons, but rather states of consciousness that are manifest only through the situations that define them." In the same vein, Rosa Boldori, determined to analyze the novel through the prism of magical and one-dimensional fate as deus ex machina, catalogues *The Time of the Hero* as a "novel of environmental determinism": chance, accident, fate decide the actions of the characters.

On the other hand, José Miguel Oviedo, one of the most profound critics of the works and literary personality of Mario Vargas Llosa, observes that it is liberty□at times conditioned by the environment or by situations in which social pressure exerts its power, at times dissolving itself nervously in the doubt of the characters□that will make of *The Time of the Hero* an existential novel, one that frames within its interior the humiliating conditioning of rules and collective environments and the irrational rebellion of those who, placed in a determined "situation," dodge the difficulties and freely choose the best personal way to escape the labyrinth. It is, then, in that "mixture of two totally different philosophies: social determinism and existentialism," perceived by McMurray, that the factor is rooted which forces the characters many times to configure as luck or ambiguity (but by their own will) those actions or reactions that function as key elements in *The Time of the Hero.* The same factor, independently of the strings that the author controls through the complicated mechanism of creation, forces each concept in *The Time of the Hero* (attraction or rejection, confinement or dissociation) to provoke its opposite, makes each concept function in the role of its opposite in order to contrast the problematic and maladapted personalities of the protagonists and to define them in bipolarity, in the symbiosis of violence and serenity, of appearance and secrecy, the fusion that marks within the novel the pendulum- like movement taking it from one concept to another, from one pole to its opposite.

We understand that chance is not, then, the key element in the total conformation of *The Time of the Hero,* and that, at the same time, it does not structurally exercise any organizing function in the narrative discourse. Neither is it possible to establish adequate, serious and profound analytical consequences starting from the unidimensional suppositions of deterministic criticism. It would seem much more coherent to examine the structural functionality of a work from the point of conceptual bipolarity of the opposing contexts. In this sense, two distinct worlds move within the novel: the world of appearance and the world of secrecy, areas to which we have referred earlier. These two worlds are within the same forge of the narrative structure of the work, shaping, to a greater or lesser degree, the symmetry or asymmetry of the elements that constitute the novelistic whole.

If we enumerate now, analytically, the characteristics of the first eight chapters of the novel (part one), we will observe that these proportionate, symmetrical, objective characteristics shape an interior world which responds to secret codes, to different readings of the world of appearance. As an inherent consequence of these same characteristics, there flows, in this first part of the novel, a fundamental concept in which criticism has not placed sufficient interest: secrecy. If we examine part two of the novel, the second eight chapters, we will observe in it characteristics opposite to those indicated in the first part of the novel. Here reign subjectivity and spontaneity, that is, the denunciation which wears down the secret passages of the clandestine world of the cadets, a subterranean world with its own laws, with codes of honor created in the image and likeness of their organizers. Critical analysis determines that in the first eight chapters the action is somehow moved along by a personal and collective consciousness which respects to the greatest extent those secret codes that shape the world of the cadets. No other person in *The Time of the Hero* will have access to this clandestine world, because only the cadets have the ability to be absolutely knowledgeable of the rules of their world; only they, within their different personalities, can consent to and complete the secrets which they themselves offer in order to shape and constitute a different world, distant, opposed to that of appearance with rules imposed from without, at first from a familial basis and later from the school's military basis.

Consequently the code of values of the cadets is basically supported by *secrecy:* all the cadets are, to some extent, accomplices of all the clandestine acts of the Circle; they all participate in its benefits and its prejudices. But the cadets, as a group, merit a more profound study, in this case, with respect to their behavior. Without a doubt they are the group of actors that has the most meaning in the work. The world of *The Time of the Hero* is completely tinged by pressure from the cadets who act as the real, the only protagonists in the story. Around them revolve action and relationship; they direct the dynamism of the narrative discourse, marking the point of action and the counterpoint of relationship; they impose their perspective. Other characters in the work, who are many times only excuses to explicate the plot that connects the adolescents, are arranged in relation to the cadets and their behavior; they will be the ones actually responsible for their action, for the choice of their "situation." They are, finally, the authors of a secret code of values, of their secret world, a world closed, blind, without the solution of continuity, a world which connects them with a universe created by themselves, first, in order to escape family pressure, then second, to make fun of military rules. Their vital motives will impose themselves through the course of the narration, and finally they (except the propitiatory victim, the Slave) are the ones capable of fleeing toward maturity, that relative independence of individual liberty (Alberto, Jaguar . . .). They are the ones who arrange and disarrange, who choose and who feel disdain, who keep silent or denounce. The cadets take it upon themselves to emulate their elders (familial and military) upon breaking those binding pacts that demand the internal coherence of the group, and they avoid, up until the moment of denunciation, the conceptual counterpoint of treason. They are the sardonic witnesses of family discord, of which they will take advantage, and the silent accomplices, the mute shapers of the apparently strict world demarcated by military rules. They themselves are responsible for internal disagreements, the victims also (the Slave, for example) of the deeds which individual

sentiments end up imposing upon the collective code, upon their apparent and fictitious camaraderie.

Thus, the cadets themselves will dissolve their secret world. After Alberto's denunciation before Lieutenant Gamboa (part two, chapter three) will come the discovery of that clandestine world the cadets have concocted and the consequential dismantling of the values which, for the cadets, constitute manliness: the escapes (*contras*), the cigarettes, the alcoholic drinks, the thefts, "business," the violent sexual world of masturbation and bestialism. That denunciation is based on one of the principal events of the novel: the death of the Slave. Denunciation and vengeance are products of the same youthful strategy. When Alberto denounces the Circle's activity, he emphasizes the secrecy of school life:

"They drove [the Slave] crazy, they bullied him all
the time, and now they've murdered him!" . . . Alberto
said. "The officers don't know anything about
what goes on in the barracks."
"Everybody in the Academy smokes," Alberto said
aggressively . . . "The officers don't know a thing
about what goes on."
"Pisco and beer, Lieutenant. Didn't I tell you the
officers don't know what's going on? The cadets
drink more in the Academy than they do when they're
on pass."
"Who killed him?"
"The Jaguar, Sir, the leader. . . ."
"Who is the Jaguar" Gamboa asked. "I don't know
the nicknames of the cadets. Tell me their right names."

Furthermore, the cadets, as a collective entity, not only carry out the complicated mechanisms of the content, nor are they limited to manipulating only the functionality of the anecdote: upon analysis, there exists a gradual parallelism between the internal coherence of the cadets' world□which, I repeat, is founded on secrecy□and the proportionality of the formal structure of *The Time of the Hero.* On attending the disintegration of the code of values they secretly invent and sustain in the Academy, we are attending the slow dissolution of the proportionality of the formal structure of the novel, still prevailing in almost all of part one. As long as the collective codes of the adolescents remain intact and their content is respected by the cadets, we can speak of the proportional equilibrium of the novelistic structure; as a counterpoint, it will be from the basis of the dissolution of those codes□which have made possible the union between the cadets and their secret world□that the proportionality, the certain regularity in the structural levels of the novel, disintegrates in order to give way to the formal incoherence of the structure. Thus it can be determined that the concept of secrecy exercises a structural function in *The Time of the Hero.*

When does the regularity, the structural proportionality of the novel, begin to crack? Two episodes mark the boundary of this rupture: first, for personal reasons, Ricardo Arana,

"the Slave," denounces the theft of the chemistry test (part one, chapter six). The collective complicity breaks down, and, second, the same Arana suffers a fatal accident during military maneuvers (part one, chapter eight). But these are only conjectures, and only the collective complicity has broken down here. The cadets and the reader will not realize, until much later, that those two episodes are marking the beginning of the dissolution of the honor code, precipitating motives and countermotives, accusations and denunciations that finally will bring about the disintegration of the secret world of the adolescents. It will be from the point of the news of the Slave's death (part two, chapter one) that the novel's plot, moving toward its denouement, shows us□to us the readers and to the officials of the school□the secret world of the cadets. Simultaneously that process of conceptual dissolution will influence directly the structural parameter of the work. The irregular behavior of the principal group of actors in the novel leads simultaneously to an irregular structure at formal levels.

This functionality of the concept of secrecy in the formal structure of the novel constitutes, without a doubt, one of the fundamental characteristics and, at the same time, one of the most outstanding stylistic features of *The Time of the Hero.*

Source: J.J. Armas Marcelo, "Secrecy: A Structural Concept of The Time of the Hero," in *World Literature Today,* Vol. 52, No. 1, Winter, 1978, p. 68.

Critical Essay #5

In the following essay on Mario Vargas Llosa's novel The Time of the Hero (La cuidad y los perros)*, Frank Dauster discusses the relationships between history and literature and the varying interpretations of reality they may engender.*

The relations between history and literature have concerned man since he first developed what might be called a historical consciousness. Aristotle has said:

> It is, moreover, evident . . . that it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen—what is possible according to the laws of probability or necessity. The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or in prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular.

Now certainly no historian would accept Aristotle's hierarchy, nor, probably, his distinction into particular and universal. It is not at all certain that Aristotle meant this distinction in the bald terms cited. The fact remains, however, that the historian and the social scientist deal in the collection and interpretation of verifiable data, whereas the novelist, poet or dramatist is usually totally unconcerned with such phenomena. How then may these areas be related? In what way is literature valid as source material for non-literary investigations? And, to go a step further, in what way or ways do the literary critic and the historian share an interest in literature?

It is obvious that much criticism and many critics share no such interest at all and would reject such questions as invalid. The New Critics, for example, and formalist criticism in general are remote from such matters. But few of us are exclusively formalists, and nearly all of us sometimes read for other purposes. Usigli's *Corona de sombra* is a most interesting experiment in dramatic form and stage technique; it is also, and this must not be forgotten, an attempt to interpret all Mexican history after the French Intervention in the light of the events of that Intervention and the brief Empire. Clearly, there is here an area of considerable mutual concern.

Corona de sombra has been subjected to criticism by historians because of Usigli's tinkering with verifiable fact. Without resuscitating the old chestnut about how historical is a historical novel, it is fair to say that Usigli commits virtually every sin in the literal-minded historian's catalogue. He alters chronology, attributes invented ideas and speeches to historical figures and, in general, recreates history in a highly idiosyncratic fashion.

He cometido diversas arbitrariedades e incurrido en anacronismos deliberados, que responden todos a un objeto. Por ejemplo, Pío IX sólo alcanza la aceptación de la infalibilidad pontifical después del 70, y en mi pieza habla de ella en 1866. Vista a la distancia, reducida a las cuatro presurosas y heladas líneas de los mortuarios enciclopédicos, y amplificada por la memoria y la actualidad, la gran acción, la línea maestra de la vida de Pío IX es ésa. Su obra en definitiva es haber contrarrestado en lo posible la pérdida del poder temporal de la iglesia con el reconocimiento de los dogmas. Dudo que pudiera reprocharse a un sonetista el encerrar su tema en catorce versos, y este procedimiento me parece teatralmente intachable. ¿Qué es Pío Nono sino el símbolo original de la infalibilidad del Papa?

The fundamental opposition is made clear in a "Carta crítica" by Marte R. Gómez, published in the same volume, in which Gómez holds the position that literature must at all times be literally faithful to recorded history. Usigli's answer denies this pettyfogging approach and spells out his belief in the function of the writer when he speaks of "la historia, que desatiendo en el detalle, pero que interpreto en la trayectoria del tiempo."

Obviously, Usigli's point of view is that the writer is a trustworthy interpretor of reality. This does not seem to me as potentially dangerous a thesis as might at first appear. We do not suggest that the artist is the one source of revealed truth in regard to anything, but certainly his perspective on reality is an important one. Who better than Quevedo makes us shudder at the grim spectacle of a high culture in decline, a great empire falling into ruin? In our own South, long before the nation realized the enormity of racism, Faulkner captured the complex social relations racism produces. These are only two of the giants who have captured the spirit of an epoch or a culture, who have shown reality from an admittedly partial but nonetheless valid point of view, but they illuminate the point. Nor need the works be of such stature; the astonishing plays of the Rosas period would be an invaluable source to the historian of Argentina. If, to return to Aristotle, tragedy is "an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude . . . ," is not all art an "imitation" of some portion of the artist's world? Is not literature truly a mirror of the world, if we speak of the giants such as Cervantes or Shakespeare, or at least a partial vision of reality, in the work of any serious artist?

There are important applications of these notions when we deal with the work of such younger writers as Mario Vargas Llosa. Students of his novels repeatedly refer to them as microcosms. It would be a serious error to regard a novel such as *La ciudad y los perros* as some sort of marvelous code which would explain for us the vagaries of things Peruvian, but the book undeniably contains much which is important in this respect: hostility toward the *serranos,* the frivolity of the bourgeoisie, urban poverty, the intransigent self-seeking of much of the military. There are implications for all Latin

America: the rigidly defined social classes and inveterate *machismo* are only two examples.

But these are all, to use Aristotle's term, particulars, and it might be argued that there is something in *La ciudad y los perros* which transcends the particular. We may well be appalled at a monstrosity such as the Colegio Leoncio Prado, but it does exist, and its governing officials chose to burn publicly a thousand copies of the novel. But the benighted gentlemen who saw fit to respond in the time-honored fashion of the closed mind to what they considered an attack on their institution, were completely mistaken. Ironically, the real signifi- cance of the novel is more drastic still. The arsonists may have been correct when they maintained that it was not literally true; but the literal truth of the Leoncio Prado is secondary to the higher truth which is undeniable, the spiritual horror which no amount of book burning can hide. Whether those responsible were in any way connected with the coup which ousted the government of President Belaúnde Terry is unknown, but when Vargas Llosa portrayed all Lima as a military establishment, he accurately captured the spirit of the city's ruling caste.

It is in this sense that *La ciudad y los perros* speaks of Aristotle's universals. As Emir Rodríguez Monegal has said of "The new novelists," "Their novels are mirrors and, at the same time, anticipations." Lima is, for Vargas Llosa, a regimented inhuman society which forces even its youth into a moral and intellectual straightjacket: "Así, la historia de un grupo de adolescentes se convierte en una radiografía de la crueldad en las relaciones humanas y por extensión de la sociedad que la justifica como parte de su entrenamiento necesario. De un modo u otro se reconoce que los jóvenes deben ser duros porque la vida es dura, implacables porque la sociedad empuja a los débiles y los aplasta." This is, after a fashion, Horatio Alger in reverse; innocence is exploited and the traditional values mocked. It would perhaps not be too exaggerated to see the novel as the destruction of the myth of bourgeois education. Rodríguez Monegal has written eloquently of the falsification of honor which lies at the heart of *La ciudad y los perros,* of the manner in which all the characters are alienated and driven to adopt behavior which is essentially contrary to their natures. He has spoken of the work as an allegory of honor, of "códigos y contracódigos." The moral corruption which permeates the novel speaks to the heart of the problem. But how may the historian utilize this material? There is the obvious danger that he suffers from misconceptions about the nature of literature. In a recent article in the *New York Times Book Review,* John Lukacs said that

> the novelist's description of certain contemporary scenes is often first-rate historical evidence. I have often thought that Stendhal's . . . description of Waterloo in *The Charterhouse of Parma* ought to be required reading in our military colleges, since it is such a powerful corrective to abstract schemes of battle orders, as well as to the false image of the 19th century battle being one long melee of brightly uniformed soldiers, punctuated by the flashes of bayonets, the sabers of cavalry, and the Beethovenian sound of cannon in the background.

But this is not the point; literature is not some sort of documentation. Lukacs is closer to the mark when he states approvingly that Lampedusa's *The Leopard* "tells us more about the 1860 'revolution' in Sicily . . . than what most liberal historians tell us." But what are we to make of his astonishing assertion that "the artistic task of the historian is greater [than that of the novelist], because his restrictions are greater?"

This is a radical misunderstanding of what literature is all about, a disregard for that which is most characteristic of art, the process of artistic creation. It is not, however, my purpose to debate hierarchies of creative value, whether Aristotelian or Lukacsian. Rather, I suggest that the novel, the play, the short story and the poem may be sources of crucial insights into the complex reality of the world about us. There is probably no better means to understand many of the causes and certainly the fundamental fact of the Mexican Revolution than Yáñez' *Al filo del agua.* Yáñez, Rulfo, Fuentes, Paz and two or three others ought to be required reading for anyone who wishes to study Mexico from any point of view or any discipline, simply because they are enormously illuminating perspectives on the very complicated fabric of Mexican reality. They are not statistics and cannot be substituted for statistics, but it is doubtful that any amount of statistical or archival research will ever give the insight into Mexican reality which we receive from their work.

It would be naive not to recognize that the novelists themselves are cognizant of this aspect of their work; the social commitment of younger Latin American writers is notorious. Vargas Llosa has stated, "Creo que ambos□el intelectual y el creador□deben ocupar un puesto en la lucha pro la liberación nacional, en cuanto ciudadanos." The key words here are "en cuanto ciudadanos"; Vargas Llosa distinguishes between the artist as artist and the artist as citizen. It would be erroneous to infer that he and his generation are writing political or social tracts. On the contrary; the artist is a perpetual noncomformist who will be critical of *any* social or political organism.

> Es preciso . . . recordar a nuestras sociedades lo que les espera. Advertirles que la literatura es fuego, que ella significa inconformismo y rebelión, que la razón de ser del escritor es la protesta, la contradicción y la crítica. Explicarles que no hay término medio: que la sociedad suprime para siempre esa facultad humana que es la creación artística y elimina de una vez por todas a ese perturbador social que es el escritor, o admite la literatura en su seno y en ese caso no tiene más remedio que aceptar un perpetuo torrente de agresiones, de ironías, de sátiras, que irán de lo adjetivo a lo esencial, de lo pasajero a lo permanente, del vértice a la base de la pirámide social. Las cosas son así y no hay escapatoria: el escritor ha sido, es y seguirá siendo un descontento. Nadie que esté satisfecho es capaz de escribir, nadie que esté de acuerdo, reconciliado con la realidad, comentaría el ambicioso desatino de inventar realidades verbales.

La vocación literaria nace del desacuerdo de un hombre con el mundo, de la intuición de deficientias, vacíos y escorias a su alrededor. La literatura es una forma de insurrección permanente y ella no admite las camisas de fuerza. Todas las tentativas destinadas a doblegar su naturaleza airada, díscola, fracasarán. La literatura puede morir pero no será nunca conformista.

But the serious writer does not come easily to this position, nor is he simply a gadfly. Vargas Llosa has given testimony of the internal tensions created by this double vocation.

Pero entiendo que en el caso del creador se plantea un desgarramiento irremediable, ya que en el creador el elemento determinante no es nunca racional, sino espontáneo, incontrolable, esencialmente intuitivo. Y el escritor no puede poner ese elemento al servicio de nada de una manera premeditada. En cierta forma, el creador se plantea así una verdadera duplicidad, o por lo menos una terrible tensión: quiere ser fiel a una determinada concepción política y al mismo tiempo necesitaser fiel a su vocación. Si ambas coinciden, perfecto, peso si divergen se plantea la tensión, se produce el desgarramiento. No debemos, empero, rehuir ese desgarramiento; debemos, por el contrario, asumirlo plenamente, y de ese mismo desgarramiento hacer literatura, hacer creación. Es una opción difícil, complicada, torturada, si se quiere, pero imprescindible.

I suggest that precisely in this tension, we may find invaluable intuitions about the nature of Latin America today. These intuitions are radically different from those we find in the novels of forty years ago, which are often closer to sociological studies than to literature. As Rodríguez Monegal has pointed out, the new novelists "han concluido de una vez por todas con el realismo documental, con la novela de la tierra, con la denuncia social de tipo panfletario, con la escisión maniqueísta del mundo en personajes buenos (los explotados, siempre) y personajes malos, con la mediocre prosa de altas intenciones."

Again, we must not confuse the perspective on the world which we find in these younger writers with some sort of preachment. No one will ever understand what literature is until he learns the lesson which Kitto points out: "When therefore we say that the Greek dramatist was an artist, we are not using a tired platitude meaning that he preferred pretty verses and plots to ill-made ones; we mean that he felt, thought and worked like a painter or a musician, not like a philosopher or a teacher.

The new novelists are just such artists, and their works are artistic wholes. Not only is it ludicrous to attempt to abstract information from the plots while ignoring the fact that

these plots form part of a work of art; such a procedure overlooks the fact that in the form, too, there is meaning. Vargas Llosa's predilection for the chivalric novel is little short of notorious. This is not simply a matter of pardonable aberrant criticism, but a vital link in his creative process. His fascination is rooted in the effort to capture the whole of reality:

> Lo que más sorprende al lector en las novelas de caballería, es la habilidad del narrador para capturar la realidad a todos sus niveles. Ahí vemos transcurrir la vida cotidiana de la Edad Media . . . estas novelas, escritas en un lenguaje a veces bárbaro, son como tentativas de abarcar la realidad a todos sus niveles, pretender decirlo todo, quieren abarcarlo todo. Yo creo que las mejores novelas son las que se han acercado a esta posición, es decir, las que expresan las cosas desde todos los puntos de vista que se pueden expresar. . . .

Is this not what *La ciudad y los perros* or *La casa verde* are really all about, a *total experience*? Complexity may be captured only through complexity. Vargas Llosa's use of different techniques for different characters, the intricately interwoven plot strands, the wildly mercurial and almost irrelevant chronology, and the deliberate withholding of crucial pieces of information, may all be literary tricks, but they are tricks which help the reader to capture the spirit of a whole society through the microcosm of the Colegio Leoncio Prado. Vargas Llosa has said that the best novels "convierten la lectura en una experiencia del mundo." This experience of the world, expressed through the artist's capacities, gives us an unrivalled intuitive perception of the reality around us and it is a source of rare insight. This is the real value of literature to the historian of the social scientist: not as documentation, but as a source of intuitions, of revealing insights into the fabric of the writer's world. Insofar as the critic or the historian would perceive the nature of our world, not through a mass of accumulated data but through the revealing perception of which the artist is supremely capable, so they share a common interest, whatever other professional concerns may also lead them to literature. As Joseph Sommers has said so aptly, "the novelist is somehow connected with history, . . . by channels of intuition, psychology or spirit he participates in his times. Paradoxically, however, the extent to which he respects his craft, treating the novel as an autonomous creation, is the degree to which he may convey indirectly a significant interpretive commentary on his times."

Source: Frank Dauster, "Aristotle and Vargas Llosa: Literature, History and the Interpretation of Reality," in *Hispania,* May, 1970, p. 273.

Topics for Further Study

The initiation rituals described in the novel are also known by the term "hazing." Research the role of hazing in neighborhoods, gangs, boarding schools, fraternities, or military academies. What is hazing and how does it differ depending on setting, if at all? Why is this traditional practice under scrutiny? What are the legal issues? Do you think hazing is simply a part of growing up and that the death rate is unavoidable?

How many levels of masculinity are there in the novel? How many levels of race? Compare the multiplicity of hierarchical levels in Peruvian society to the structure of the U.S.

William Faulkner looms behind the Latin American Boom. Compare Faulkner's *Light in August* to *The Time of the Hero*. How, for example, has Vargas Llosa drawn from Faulkner and with what results?

Given the preoccupation with sex that the adolescent boys have throughout the novel, reflect on the implications of the opening citation from Sartre on gender.

Research the debate in America over gays in the military. How has the debate changed perceptions of masculinity?

Research the role of the U.S. in the manufacturing of military regimes throughout Latin America during the Cold War. For example, why do U.S. and Latin American political activists object to the U.S.'s School of the Americas? What sort of academy is it and what are the most likely accomplishments of its graduates?

Compare and Contrast

1960s: In response to the Cuban Revolution, a force of U.S. CIA-trained Cuban exiles invade Cuba unsuccessfully in 1961 (an incident known as "the Bay of Pigs"). The U.S.S.R., to help defend its communist ally, tries to install missiles in Cuba. The U.S. refuses to allow the placement of missiles so close. The tense standoff in the fall of 1962 ends when the U.S. promises not to invade Cuba.

Today: Although many governments have changed their policies, the U.S. maintains a trade embargo on Cuba. Cuba, meanwhile, has outlived its larger communist ally, the Soviet Union, and has sought trade and reconciliation with anyone, including the Pope.

1960s: Much of Latin America adopts import substitution industrialization (ISI) economic theory after World War I until the 1960s. This protectionist policy encourages domestic production of items otherwise imported. Political instability fostered by the neglect of land reform issues lead to its demise.

Today: Fujimori, having defeated Shining Path and furthered Belaunde's privatization schemes, has made Peru friendly to foreign (especially Japanese and U.S.) investors. The economy has grown and the disparity between the rich and poor has increased.

1960s: To stem the flow of people to the West, East German soldiers ripped up the streets on the night of April 13, 1961, and the Berlin Wall was born.

Today: The Berlin Wall has been down since 1989 but the reunification of Germany has proven costly and painful.

1960s: Renegade priests throughout Latin America switched sides and began preaching 'liberation theology.' No longer supporters of the oligarchy, the priests sermonized against oppression of the poor and spoke favorably of Marxist reforms. Meanwhile, Pope John XXIII convened the Second Vatican Council to begin a reform of the Catholic Church.

Today: Catholicism is still strong in Latin America although as economic conditions improve for more people, its followers are secularizing. Pope John Paul II has made huge strides in reforming the church and in breaking down barriers between Catholicism, the Eastern Orthodox church, other sects of Christianity, Jews, and Muslims.

What Do I Read Next?

In his second novel, *La casa verde* (1966; translation by Gregory Rabassa published as *The Green House* 1968), Vargas Llosa again took experiences from his own life and created a work about the whole of Peru. His visit with an Amazonian tribe as part of an anthropological expedition as well as his experience of a brothel in the town of Piura establish the basis for a meeting of two ends of Peruvian culture that seldom occurs. The novel begins when two nuns and a sergeant with his helpers steal two girls from the Aguaruna tribe but the girls escape.

Vargas Llosa's acceptance speech in 1967 for an award for *Green House* has been published as *La literatura es fuego* (*Literature Is Fire*). In this speech, Vargas Llosa summarized his view of the writer. He said that the writer has an obligation to assist his society in whatever way he can. For him, this means that the writer must engage in constructive criticism with the society he inhabits.

Conversacion en la catedral (1969; translation by Rabassa published as *Conversation in the Cathedral*, 1975) is the story of Santiago Zavala. Much like Vargas Llosa's other males, Santiago is expected to follow in his father's footsteps. The opposite happens when Santiago chooses to fraternize with the lower class in order to escape the corruption of his father's social group.

Vargas Llosa underwent an artistic transition which is revealed in his 1973 novel, *Pantaleon y las visitadoras* (published as *Captain Pantoja and the Special Service*, 1978). While the artistic technique differs from the novels of the 1960s, the themes are familiar: the military and corruption. Captain Pantaleon Pantoja has been given special orders to go undercover and establish a prostitution ring to serve soldiers at the front. The army hopes to end rapes on civilian women in this way but they cannot be connected with trafficking in female flesh, so Pantoja cannot tell anybody who he really is.

Using a bit of his own biography, Vargas Llosa's 1977 novel, *La tia Julia y el escribidor* (translated as *Aunt Julia and the Scriptwriter* , 1982), concerns a novelist who falls in love with his aunt. This novel explores, with humor, the struggles of the creative process.

One of Vargas Llosa's most recent novels, *Death in the Andes* (1996), involves the Shining Path movement, Dionysian rituals, a witch, human sacrifice, mystery, and Peruvian society. The storyline focuses on the disappearance of three men from a village and the soldiers who investigate. The tale turns into a murder mystery and a panoramic depiction of late-twentieth-century Peru.

The German academies of the early twentieth century served as the model for such institutions as the Leoncio Prado Academy. Robert Musil's novel *Young Torless* reveals the psychological torment boys inflict on each other in such highstress academies.

Although the protagonists are dismissed as mere boys, their mentality and behavior are not dissimilar from those of the army officers they revere.

British schoolboys are just as capable of living out male fantasies as German, Peruvian, or American boys. William Golding said as much in his classic novel, *Lord of the Flies*. A nuclear war leads to the evacuation of Britain and a planeload of prep-school boys crashes on an island. Once there, the boys form two gangs and the gang representing primitive nature would have won had the adult rescuers been any later.

The pressure placed on young men of the upper classes by their fathers is enormous, even in America. In *The Dead Poets Society*, by N. H. Kleinbaum and Stephen Haft (1989), rich boys are schooled in a stuffy atmosphere until a new English teacher, Mr. Keating, turns them on to great poets like Walt Whitman. They are so excited about literature as a result that they begin to break the rules in order to read poetry or to pursue love. Neil Perry would rather kill himself than live in his father's world where everything is serious and being an actor in a Shakespearean drama is outlawed.

Further Study

Allende, Isabel, *Of Love and Shadows*, Bantam Books, 1988.

Allende brings a feminist challenge to both the masculine world of Latin America and the Boom. *Of Love and Shadows* takes place in a Latin American country gripped by a military dictator. A wealthy woman, Irene Beltran, and a Spanish exile's son, Francisco Leal, fall in love but discover a crime which puts their lives at risk.

Bronte, Charlotte, *Jane Eyre*, Scholastic Paperbacks, 1996.

One of the first novels to investigate the struggles of a youth against circumstances is Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (originally published in 1847). Jane struggles through a boarding-school situation where there is a hint of some of the physical abuses associated with twentieth-century boarding-school stories.

Ehrenreich, Barbara, *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War*, Henry Holt, 1998.

Ehrenreich, who wrote the foreword to the University of Minnesota Press edition of Theweleit's *Male Fantasies*, has been a leading contributor to American histories of sexuality. In *Blood Rites*, Ehrenreich argues that humans developed war to deal with the anxieties of self-consciously being a part of the food chain. This argument is then used as a foundation to explain why modern efforts to achieve peace are so difficult.

Fuentes, Carlos, *Where the Air Is Clear*, Noonday Press, 1971.

The first novel of El Boom, Fuentes' 1958 story indicts Mexican society by discussing its post-revolutionary reality. An epic of Mexico City urban history, Fuentes weaves together the biographies of zany characters□including an Aztec god□to unlock the Mexican psyche.

García Márquez, Gabriel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Harperperennial Library, 1998.

Perhaps the most famous novel of the Latin American Boom, García Márquez's 1967 masterpiece perfected the magical realism style. The novel records the history of post-colonial Latin America through the fantastic struggles of the Buendia family.

Gibson, James William, *Warrior Dreams: Violence and Manhood in Post-Vietnam America*, Hill and Wang, 1994.

Gibson goes undercover to visit gun camps and affiliates of militia groups. He finds military and fascist fantasies lurk in the hidden compounds of these farright groups even in America.

Oviedo, Jose Miguel, "The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero: On Vargas Llosa's Intellectuals and the Military," translated by Richard A. Valdes, in *World Literature Today*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Winter, 1978, pp. 16-24.

Oviedo discusses the consistency with which Vargas Llosa employs the dichotomy of intellectual and military men in his fiction. The regularity with which this theme occurs leads Oviedo to conclude that this dichotomy is important to Peruvian culture and to Vargas Llosa personally. Somehow, this dichotomy must be resolved peaceably since both are intrinsic to Peru's culture.

Puig, Manuel, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, edited by Erroll McDonald, translated by Thomas Colchie, Vintage Books, 1991.

Originally published in 1976 as *El beso de la mujer arana*, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* remains the most famous novel by Puig□a member of the Boom generation condemned in his home country of Argentina for his overt homosexuality. Two men are holding a conversation in jail: the first is Molina, an apolitical homosexual; the other is Valentin, a young socialist revolutionary outraged by Molina's sexuality. By the end of the novel, they have fallen in love and switched places and perspectives.

Swanson, Philip, *The New Novel in Latin America*, Manchester University Press, 1995.

Swanson analyzes the Boom in Latin American literature by showing how it came about and who the major figures were. This account takes away the surprise of the Boom by showing who influenced Fuentes, Vargas Llosa, and García Márquez.

Theweleit, Klaus, *Male Fantasies*, Polity Press, 1987.

Theweleit examines the papers and libraries of leading Friekorpsmen to expose the sexual tensions which accompanied their warrior ideology. He places their sexual politics in the context of Fascism and its heritage of the European history of sexuality.

Vargas Llosa, Mario, *Pez, en el agua (A Fish in the Water: A Memoir)*, Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1994.

Vargas Llosa records his experience as a presidential candidate and reflects on his life. He tells of the disgusting nature of back-stabbing that accompanies political campaigning as well as the story of his journey from boy to man.

Bibliography

Castro-Klaren, Sara, *Understanding Mario Vargas Llosa*, University of South Carolina Press, 1990.

Gallagher, D. P., "Mario Vargas Llosa," Oxford University Press, 1973, pp. 122-43.

Gerdes, Dick, "*The Time of the Hero* : Lost Innocence," in *Mario Vargas Llosa*, Twayne Publishers, 1985, pp. 33-52.

Harss, Luis, and Barbara Dohmann, "Mario Vargas Llosa, or The Revolving Door," in their *Into the Mainstream: Conversations with Latin-American Writers*, Harper, 1967, pp. 342-75.

Kristal, Efrain, *Temptation of the Word: The Novels of Mario Vargas Llosa*, Vanderbilt University Press, 1998.

Marcelo, J. J. Armas, "Secrecy: A Structural Concept of *The Time of the Hero*," in *World Literature Today*, translated by Mary E. Davis, Vol. 52, No. 1, Winter, 1978, pp. 68-70.

Oviedo, Jose Miguel, "The Theme of the Traitor and the Hero: On Vargas Llosa's Intellectuals and the Military," translated by Richard A. Valdes, in *World Literature Today*, Vol. 52, No. 1, Winter, 1978, pp. 16-24.

Rossman, Charles, "Mario Vargas Llosa's *The Green House*: Modernist Novel from Peru," in *The Modernists, Studies in a Literary Phenomenon: Essays in Honor of Harry T. Moore*, edited by Lawrence B. Gamache and Ian S. MacNiven, Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1987, pp. 261-74.

Sheppard, R. Z., "Caged Condor," in *Time*, February 17, 1975, pp. E3, 84.

Vargas Llosa, Mario, "A Passion for Peru," in *New York Times Magazine*, November 20, 1983, pp. 106, 108.

□□□, *The Perpetual Orgy: Flaubert and Madame Bovary*, translated by Helen Lane, Farrar, Straus, 1986.

Williams, Raymond Leslie, "The Beginnings," in *Mario Vargas Llosa*, Ungar, 1986, pp. 19-38.

Copyright Information

This Premium Study Guide is an offprint from *Literature of Developing Nations for Students*.

Project Editor
David Galens

Editorial
Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

Research
Michelle Campbell, Nicodemus Ford, Sarah Genik, Tamara C. Nott, Tracie Richardson

Data Capture
Beverly Jendrowski

Permissions
Mary Ann Bahr, Margaret Chamberlain, Kim Davis, Debra Freitas, Lori Hines, Jackie Jones, Jacqueline Key, Shalice Shah-Caldwell

Imaging and Multimedia
Randy Bassett, Dean Dauphinais, Robert Duncan, Leitha Etheridge-Sims, Mary Grimes, Lezlie Light, Jeffrey Matlock, Dan Newell, Dave Oblender, Christine O'Bryan, Kelly A. Quin, Luke Rademacher, Robyn V. Young

Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literature of Developing Nations for Students (LDNfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, LDNfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and

undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LDNfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LDNfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in LDNfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by LDNfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LDNfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literature of Developing Nations for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LDNfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LDNfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literature of Developing Nations for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Literature of Developing Nations for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from LDNfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Literature of Developing Nations for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from LDNfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Literature of Developing Nations for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of LDNfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Literature of Developing Nations for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of LDNfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Literature of Developing Nations for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Literature of Developing Nations for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535