

on different facets of Jewish Buenos Aires that for years were silenced or were considered unimportant.

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WILFRIDO H. CORRAL: *'Vargas Llosa: la batalla de las ideas'*. Madrid: Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2012.

In *Vargas Llosa: La Batalla En Las Ideas*, Wilfrido H. Corral aims to define the type of public intellectual Mario Vargas Llosa embodied, and in the process reclaim Vargas Llosa for Latin Americans. While cognizant of the global inspirations and corollary international admiration that largely made Vargas Llosa the public figure he is today, Corral is focused on assessing the writer's message, method and historical significance as a global public intellectual within a Latin American context that is defined as much globally as it is regionally. Couched in response to Edward Said's postulations regarding intellectuals and power in *The Word, The Text, and The Critic* (1983), Corral argues that Vargas Llosa's greatest contribution lies in insisting that no one who claims to own the truth does so. Within an area of the world that is accustomed to absolutes when engaging in historical, political, and literary processes, Vargas Llosa emerges thus as singular in his conviction to honor the art of fiction for the sake of democracy. Corral substantiates this claim in an innovative study that understands Vargas Llosa's novels alongside his non-fiction writings and political aspirations, including newspaper contributions, letters, speeches, and interviews dating throughout the writer's literary career and ending in 2012. The end result proves Corral's mastery over Vargas Llosa's works and the corollary erudition to place his subject within his historical and intellectual milieu.

In Corral's account, Vargas Llosa emerges as an exceptional Latin American public intellectual who ran for office yet adamantly insisted on not using his own words and his access to the public to espouse truths with capital "t's", utopias, or programmatic solutions at that time or any other. Steadfastly advocating instead for democracy via unfettered discourse (and economies), Corral shares Vargas Llosa's definition of "literary lies" of the sort the latter combats by engaging in conversations rather than prescriptions:

La violencia es el lenguaje de la incomunicación, la forma como se comunican los miembros de una sociedad en la que el diálogo ha desaparecido o no existido nunca. Quienes no pueden o quieren

entenderse y están obligados a vivir juntos, se hacen daño y terminan destruyéndose. La violencia social manifiesta la profunda incomunicación que caracteriza a una sociedad. (94-5)

Furthermore, Corral claims that Vargas Llosa's political career served foremost as a platform through which to test ideas he intended to advocate primarily in the literary realm (94). In a region so often caught up in utopias, and utopic visions enunciated no less by politicians, Corral highlights Vargas Llosa's mirrored approach to politics and art as noteworthy: "Vargas Llosa permite un diálogo mayor, ya que cuestiona qué hace uno después de que se logre la coincidencia entre lo real y lo ideal..." (43). Corral makes use of Foucault's version of a "specific intellectual" to define Vargas Llosa's brand of public intellectual: one who counters existing power structures by exposing those who err, rather than by trying to correct the wrong (and aligning with a historical theory in so doing) (324).

In his work, Corral joins a cadre of scholars who are interested in the connection between Vargas Llosa's politics and his literature (Alberto Carlos, León David, William Rowe, Ignacio Sotelo, Francesc Arroyo and Zuzunaga Flórez), yet Corral's innovation lies in extending the subject of study beyond the author's novels to include his non-fiction and to understand his political career in light of his literary methods, instead of conversely. While a worthwhile endeavor, and one that up until now has been admittedly sparse, perhaps Corral's most noteworthy contribution is his own production of a book of scholarship exclusively directed at Latin American connoisseurs of Vargas Llosa's life and work. The point of departure for *Vargas Llosa: La Batalla En Las Ideas* is his assumption that the reader has extensive familiarity with Vargas Llosa's works, political career, and intellectual milieu within Latin America. Corral holds high regard for the Western intellectuals and writers who inspired Vargas Llosa; and yet the American-educated Ecuadorian author deliberately intends the book for a Hispanic readership in an effort to counter the external gaze so pervasively internalized in the Latin American experience.

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