

(p. 182, line 10), “Louis XI” for Louis XIV (p. 192, line 14), “nuanceing” for “nuancing” (p. 233, line 36), and “like other *auto sacramentales*” (p. 234, line 38). Too often lack of clarity results from awkward wordings, the incorrect or ill-advised use of terms, and bad grammar. Perplexing expressions include “it similarly references the Reformation disagreements about Protestant and Catholic disagreements” (p. 237, lines 11–14). A startlingly incorrect use of “mitigating” to mean its opposite (“making worse”) occurs twice (95n62, lines 2–3 and p. 98, lines 28–30). Imprecise or mistaken utterances include “conversing . . . the Spanish empire” (p. 259, lines 20–21). Additional uncertainties arise from a puzzling lack of agreement between subject and verb (e.g., p. 49–50, lines 36–1; p. 97, lines 5–6; p. 103, lines 10–13; p. 108, lines 16–17; p. 137, lines 1–4; p. 213, lines 5–6; p. 237, lines 27–29; and p. 251, lines 8–10). Lack of parallelism in sentence structure is another source of bewilderment for the reader (e.g., p. 50, lines 10–14 and p. 153, lines 25–28).

Research on the Habsburg theater up to the past few decades shows that investigators attuned exclusively to Maravall’s perspectives frequently overlooked the significance of subtextual references that are often not central to the main theme. Such a single-minded approach often led them to view such passing remarks as establishing a realistic backdrop for dramatic action, as reflections of contemporary realities rather than criticisms of them. Although some readers may conclude that Gasta overstates his case at times, his efforts add further evidence that Golden Age playwrights addressed in guarded ways many of the severe problems of seventeenth-century Spain. His commentaries will be instructive to students of Spanish culture, society, and literature, and useful to specialists seeking examples of veiled denunciations of existing policies, cultural practices, and social conditions. As such, this book is a valuable contribution to Spanish literary studies.

**Geoffrey Voght**

*Independent Scholar*

**Habra, Hedy.** *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa*. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2012. Pp. 211. ISBN 978-8-484-89689-0.

Hedy Habra’s *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa* is a noteworthy study on select works by Mario Vargas Llosa. As Habra expands the limits of her dissertation with this book project, she addresses a relatively understudied aspect of Vargas Llosa’s creative *oeuvre*: the use of the visual image in the construction of alternate realities. Though not comprehensive in scope, Habra’s study provides adept observations on Vargas Llosa’s unique capacity to “escribir las pinturas” (189) and “pinta[r] con las palabras” (76).

Scholars who publish on Vargas Llosa often face a critical dilemma. Given the expanse of the Nobel laureate’s writing, an all-inclusive study of his work becomes a daunting task, something akin to the novelist’s own totalizing narratives. Consequently, many scholars choose to limit their studies to a specific line of inquiry, as is the case with Habra’s work on the visual image. To understand even a selection of Vargas Llosa’s literary world, however, specialized studies must be brought into the larger context of not only his fictional writings, but also his literary theories, essays, politics, and personal history. Habra effectively discusses a multitude of concepts related to the visual image, eroticism, postmodern writing, and the creation of literary worlds, but does not always place the specific works she studies within this broader scope to enlighten beyond her immediate—albeit astute—analyses. The result is a work that sometimes reads more like a series of individual articles than a cohesive book project. As the final lines of the introduction acknowledge, “algunas de las secciones de varios de los capítulos que conforman este estudio han aparecido en diferentes revistas en versiones primerizas, las cuales han sido desarrolladas y actualizadas para este libro” (17). Habra does successfully demonstrate how individual novels create “una red de lecturas intermediales” (69), but only occasionally connects them extratextually to

other aspects of Vargas Llosan scholarship. The study also would have benefited from a conclusion to review and unify the many intriguing insights found in each chapter of the book.

Individual chapters of *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa* include analyses of *Conversación en La Catedral*, *Elogio de la madrastra*, *Los cuadernos de Don Rigoberto*, *La fiesta del Chivo*, *El hablador*, *El paraíso en la otra esquina*, and the repeated appearances of Lituma as a protagonist in multiple narratives. Habra's exploration of each of these novels is noteworthy; however, including additional narratives that deal with the visual image could have strengthened her work even more. Specifically, I was surprised to find no significant discussion of *La guerra del fin del mundo*, a novel that relies heavily upon the visual image both structurally and thematically. Habra also comments repeatedly on "la consabida afición de Vargas Llosa por la pintura" (189), but includes only a few lines on the subject from the author. This is not to say that Habra is incorrect in the positions she takes, nor that we should trust Vargas Llosa's word as the ultimate authority on his own writing, but including more of the writer's own positions would have provided additional support for her otherwise excellent commentaries.

Given the number of studies published on Vargas Llosa over the years, it is sometimes difficult to contribute entirely original ideas to an extensive—and ever-increasing—corpus of scholarship. On multiple occasions, however, Habra made me view my own research in fresh ways. Among other examples, I was particularly intrigued by her comments on sexuality and creative freedom. In chapter 4, her comparison of Lucrecia from Vargas Llosa's tandem erotic novels and Urania Cabral from *La fiesta del Chivo* was exceptional. One example includes Habra's apt observation that "[a] contrario de la desbordante propensión a fantasear de doña Lucrecia, se observa que el imaginario de Urania ha permanecido congelado desde su violación" (106). Her discussion of sexual freedom and its ability to stimulate the "facultades interpretativas" (112) of Vargas Llosa's protagonists is substantiated by other links between sex and creativity found in several of the writer's essays and literary works. Though sexuality and the visual image dominate much of Habra's study, her work on *El hablador* demonstrates how other types of visual images—in the case of that novel, a single photograph in a remote exhibit in Italy—have the power to "reviv[ir] la memoria e inspira[r] la creatividad" (130). Moreover, her use of Roland Barthes and Walter Benjamin to discuss *El hablador* and her description of Lituma as a focalizing eye in multiple narratives were also particularly perceptive. Habra's book certainly has much to contribute to our understanding of ekphrasis, sexuality, and the creative process in Vargas Llosa's fiction.

While I believe that sections of *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa* will be valuable to a wide range of readers, the work, as a whole, will be most readily received by scholars already familiar with Vargas Llosa's work. Habra appropriately references a sampling of the writer's most recognized literary concepts (*vasos comunicantes*, *cajas chinas*, *strip tease invertido*, etc.) and generally includes concise definitions of these terms. At times, however, I sensed an underlying assumption that readers would already be somewhat conversant with Vargas Llosa's techniques, making it potentially difficult for neophytes to appreciate fully Habra's insights. Nonetheless, her book will undoubtedly appeal to scholars interested in Vargas Llosa's literature, even those who have not read all of the novels in the study, whereas the descriptions of the specific novels discussed are sufficient in detail to orient the reader who is generally acquainted with his writing.

Though not comprehensive in its treatment of the visual image and the creation of alternate worlds in Vargas Llosa's writings, *Mundos alternos y artísticos en Vargas Llosa* is a significant achievement that adds another valuable voice to a continuing scholarly discussion on the literature of Mario Vargas Llosa.

**David P. Wiseman**  
Brigham Young University