

BOOK REVIEW: MARIO VARGAS LLOSA DIALOGUES WITH GABRIEL LIICEANU: FACES OF EVIL IN TODAY'S WORLD & FICTION AS A VITAL NECESSITY

Ana SCALCĂU

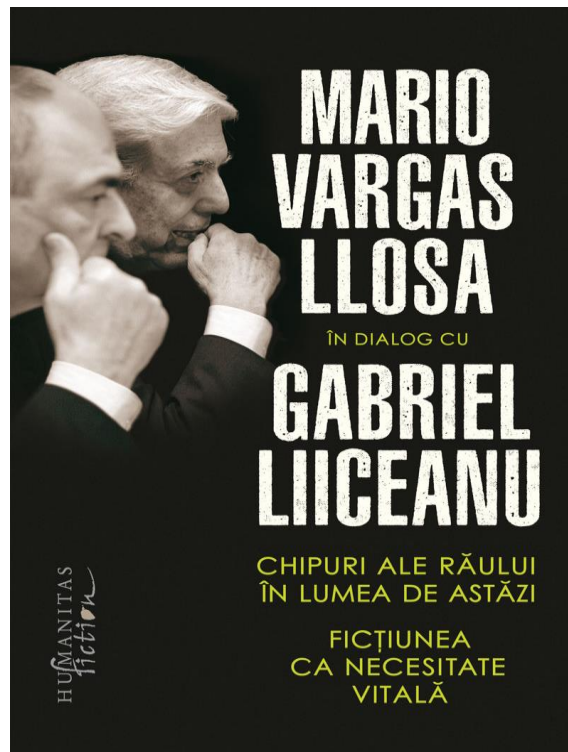
Liceul Teoretic Recaș, Recaș, Romania
anascalcau@yahoo.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24818/beman/2024.14.4-07>

Mario Vargas Llosa is a well-known and highly prolific novelist, essayist and former journalist from Peru. He has won a lot of prestigious awards, including the Miguel de Cervantes Prize (Premio de Literatura en Lengua Castellana Miguel de Cervantes) in 1994, the Pablo Neruda Order of Artistic and Cultural Merit (Orden al Mérito Artístico y Cultural Pablo Neruda) in 2018 and the prestigious Nobel Prize in Literature in 2010.

Humanitas Group has been publishing his works of both fiction and non-fiction for many years, Mario Vargas Llosa's collection including over fifty titles (such as "The War of the End of the World", "Conversation in the Cathedral", "Aunt Julia and

the Scriptwriter", "The Storyteller", "Who Killed Palomino Molero?", "In Praise of the Stepmother", "The Green House", "Death in the Andes", "The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto", "The Feast of the Goat", "The



SCALCĂU, A.

BOOK REVIEW: MARIO VARGAS LLOSA DIALOGUES WITH GABRIEL LIICEANU: FACES OF EVIL IN TODAY'S
WORLD & FICTION AS A VITAL NECESSITY

Bad Girl”, “The Discreet Hero”, “The Dream of the Celt”, “Harsh Times”, “The Winds”, “The Call of the Tribe” etc.)

The latest volume published by Humanitas in October 2024 and translated by Ileana Scipione and Olivia Petrescu contains two dialogues between Mario Vargas Llosa and Gabriel Liiceanu: “Faces of Evil in Today’s World” (which began at Romexpo on September 20th 2005 and continued a day later at the press conference organised by the Cervantes Institute in Bucharest and the Romanian Cultural Institute) and “Fiction as a Vital Necessity” (which took place at the Babeş–Bolyai University in Cluj on May 21st 2013).

The volume is quite short and can be easily read even by those who may not be familiar with the Peruvian writer’s work. In my opinion, the book has three main strengths. First of all, it addresses a variety of topics, which might seem unrelated at first, but which have in fact one common denominator: Mario Vargas Llosa’s love for literature.

Secondly, it conveys a lot of meaning by using very simple language that would be extremely easy to understand by any reader. Vargas Llosa talks about his daily routine, how writing is part of it and how it has become so, he talks about communism, the appeal of the utopia, the reasons for which intellectuals are never seduced by the idea of democracy and why all ideologies are wrong, he talks about the civilising effect of literature, which turns people into better beings from all points of view and even changes not only the way in which we see and understand the world around us, but also our perception and act of love.

Last but not least, it is a book full of optimism. In spite of some of the more serious topics which are being discussed and of the concerning statistics that Gabriel Liiceanu mentions, Mario Vargas Llosa keeps finding a silver lining and focuses on the progress that society has made rather than on its flaws. We live in an imperfect world, but it is much better than our past.