



The Language of Passion

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Mario Vargas Llosa is that rarest of writers, one who effortlessly crosses the invisible dividing line between journalism and fiction. While many readers will recognize him as the author of such novels as *The Feast of the Goat* (2001), a previous collection of essays, *Making Waves* (1997), won him the National Book Critics Circle Award. As one would expect from such a gifted writer, *The Language of Passion* displays contemporary life as it is seen through the imaginative lens of the novelist.

The “passion” in the book’s title is somewhat misleading in that it has nothing to do with romance. Rather, it alludes to the author’s firmly held convictions, whether it concerns the current political landscape or a review of a recent art exhibition. Politics figures prominently in Vargas’s world view due to the political instability of his homeland—he spent his childhood in Peru—and much of Latin America. In such chapters as “Aid for the First World,” a common theme emerges in his discussion of the poverty that is endemic to Africa and the Third World nations that comprise it: never support oppressive regimes and always encourage economic development through private enterprise. Vargas argues persuasively that the root cause of poverty is governmental interference.

Vargas is no less passionate in his views about art and the state of Western culture. His voice ranges from contempt for academe’s intellectual games in “Postmodernism and Frivolity,” to bemusement over the state of his own profession in “The Death of the Great Writer.” His telling insights regarding literature in “Predators” are more than worth the price of this modest volume. *The Language of Passion* will delight all who cherish great writing from a voice with conviction.

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