

## EDITORIAL

Editing a literary journal involves a continuous focus on the process of publication from shortlisting the articles, sending them to the reviewers, returning the articles to the authors with the reviewers' comments, and remaining alert until the journal comes out of the press in print. This, however, can in no way make the editor less sensitive, especially with regard to new publications of literary texts and also to important happenings in the world of literature and academia. In 2025, the world lost two famous litterateurs: the Kenyan author Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who died on May 28, 2025, and Mario Vargas Llosa, the Spanish-Peruvian Nobel Laureate who passed away on April 13, 2025. Notre Dame University Bangladesh and *Critical Insights* also lost Fr. Leonard Shankar Rozario, CSC, who was the Publisher of the Journal, the Registrar of the University, and also an Associate Professor in the Department of English at NDUB.

Ngugi (born January 5, 1938, in Kenya) wrote his first major novel, *Weep Not, Child* (1964), in English. As a postcolonial writer, Ngugi was sensitive to the effects of colonialism in Africa, which made him switch over to writing in the Bantu language spoken by the Kikuyu people of Kenya. In all his writings, Nguigi spoke boldly in favor of his downtrodden people who were the victims of colonialism, which even led to the loss of their traditional culture and beliefs. While Ngugi bemoaned the sufferings of the deprived people of his country, he was a strong critic of those who supported the colonizers and perpetrated different kinds of suppression and torture on the masses, whose pains and woes are expressed in his writings.

Ngugi was also a cultural and political activist, which led to imprisonment in 1977. Unfortunately, Ngugi was not even given the opportunity to defend himself in a court of law against the charges brought against him. Ngugi thought his incarceration was because of his rejection of the English language in favor of Gikuyu, a native language that people related to easily. The author's rejection of English was indeed a valiant protest against the colonizers, whose language was also English. As an important writer in postcolonial studies, Ngugi relentlessly questioned the high status and privilege of the English language and culture in postcolonial Kenya. Ngugi pioneered a movement that culminated in replacing the English Department at Nairobi University with the Department of Literature, where African Literature was given top priority.

In addition to his novels and plays, Ngugi wrote essays on culture, literature, and politics that were published in *Homecoming* (1972), *Writers in Politics*

(1981), *Barrel of a Pen* (1983), *Moving the Centre* (1993), and *Penpoints, Gunpoints and Dreams* (1998). Ngugi was a prolific writer who went on writing until the very end of his life. After he left writing in English and started using Gikuyu, it was an ingenious way of getting back to the empire.

Nguigi's greatness as a postcolonial author lies in the fact that his name will always be mentioned alongside those of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, Chakravorty and Homi Bhabha, all belonging to the first generation of postcolonial theorists. Both Ngugi and Said agreed that colonialism was not yet gone, but its remnants remained embedded in the postcolonial reality, reshaped by repressive governments that treat the citizens of independent countries with disdain and apathy. People of these newly independent countries are still shackled to poverty, and the ruling class continues the same exploitation that the colonizers had resorted to. Although historically the days of colonialism are over, in reality, many of the tools of oppression, used by the colonizers, have merely changed hands.

Mario Vargas Llosa is primarily a novelist and essayist, but he was also a political activist, eventually a politician, who contested the Presidential election but was defeated. Unlike Ngugi, Llosa was not left-leaning; he chose the middle path and wanted democracy to flourish in Peru, where he was born on March 28, 1936, and where he died on April 13, 2025. Llosa's novels include *The Time of the Hero* (1963), *The Green House* (1966), and *Conversation in the Cathedral* (1969). Many critics argue in favor of Llosa being the most significant writer of Latin America, whose impact on the world was more than any other author of Latin American origin.

Llosa had always been a scathing critique of military dictatorships in Latin America that he thought were aimed against the peoples of countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Bolivia, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Military dictatorships in these countries violated human rights in different ways. From forced disappearances to extra-judicial murders, and from curtailing civil liberties to destroying democratic institutions, the military did everything possible to secure its stay in power at the expense of liberty and economic justice.

In his widely acclaimed debut novel, *The Time of the Hero* (1963), Llosa satires the characters in a military academy, which infuriated the men in uniform so much that they burnt thousands of copies of the novel publicly. The novel is about a group of cadets in the Leonardo Prado Military Academy in Lima, who want to be relieved of the sadistic ragging, mindless military discipline, and senseless regimentation. The young cadets, in their frenzy to subvert the system, trigger off betrayal, murder, and revenge that put at risk the military hierarchy.

The structure of the novel is also notable: it has two parts consisting of eight chapters with an epilogue. Llosa uses multiple narrators to fast-forward the plot. There is an omniscient third-person narrator and two first-person ones whose identities remain secret until much later in the novel. Llosa's next major novel, *The Green House* (1966), is also remarkable for its non-linear narrative and the author's exposure of the brothel and the frontier, both of which restrict economic outflow and social transgression. In this novel, Llosa shows how the military and the police enforce sexual norms. Also, the depiction of females such as bar waiters, native girls, and nuns becomes an example of how power is responsible for regulating female bodies and their desire. According to Carlos Granés:

*The Time of the Hero*, *The Green House*, and *Conversation in the Cathedral*, published respectively in 1963, 1966, and 1969, were great fictional constructions in which he [Llosa] made a detailed analysis of Militarism, machismo, religious dogmatism, or any other form of irascible power that held sway over people. Whether it was in military academies, brothels, missions, jungle areas, or bourgeois surroundings, it always ended badly for Vargas Llosa's characters, who were spiritually weak, submerged in the most abject mediocrity, or turned into something they didn't want to be. (8)

In the end, I have to express my gratitude and indebtedness to Father Leonard Shankar Rozario, CSC, the Publisher of *Critical Insights*. In his death, Notre Dame University Bangladesh lost a promising scholar who was also simultaneously working as the Registrar of the University. Soft-spoken and mild-mannered, Fr. Shankar will be remembered for a long time by his students and colleagues. On behalf of the Board of Editors of *Critical Insights*, I express my deep condolences to the family of the deceased.

**Golam Sarwar Chowdhury**

Editor

### **Works Cited**

Granés, Carlos. "Foreword." *Sabers and Utopias: Visions of Latin America: Essays*, by Mario Vargas Llosa, translated by Anna Kushner, Picador, 2019, pp. 5-21.