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"Diamonds and Flint" by José María Arguedas: A critical translation

Auerbach, David Andrew, Ph.D.

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300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

DIAMONDS AND FLINT

BY JOSE MARIA ARGUEDAS:

A CRITICAL TRANSLATION

by

DAVID A. AUERBACH

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Date

Executive Officer

Mary Ann Caws

Electa Arenal

Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Vincent Crapanzano

It is the intention of this paper to present a translation of José María Arguedas's novella Diamantes y pedernales (Diamonds and Flint) within a critical context so that the life and work of Arguedas may be understood in terms of Latin American and World Literatures.

José María Arguedas (1911-1969), a relatively obscure name to many North American readers, has had a considerable impact on the literature produced in the Spanish-speaking world, especially in those countries with large indigenous populations. The novella that is produced here in translation does not represent one of the author's major works; nevertheless, it does provide us with further insights into the troubled mind and imperfect genius of a writer who devoted most of his life to the defense of his

nation's native inhabitants and their culture. Many thematic elements that are rendered more masterfully, or on a broader and more complex canvas, in his later works (Los ríos profundos, El sexto, Todas las sangres, El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo), are presented in this novella with the precision and simplicity of a folktale. The process of acculturation, the loss of cultural and personal identity, the racism and political abuse that are characteristic of an encrusted and centuries-old caste system are rendered here in a direct and plausible fashion.

Arguedas, whose works have been referred to as both Indigenista and Magical Realist, will be considered against a background of political and aesthetic influences that helped to shape his own work as well as that of many other writers in Latin America during this period.

One of the central issues for Arguedas was the notion of authenticity. It was his aspiration to render the plight of the native Peruvian in a manner that was genuine in its considerations of both form and content. In Diamonds and Flint, as in other works, the author relies on his own experience to present a disinherited point of view -- one that internalizes the indigenous perspective (and which incorporates the use of Quechua language, mythology and symbolism), but which is inevitably neither indigenous nor

Western. In this light, we shall examine the manner in which authentic depiction has evolved within an historical and critical context; how realism and Marxism have affected literature in 20th century Latin America; how artists in this hemisphere have utilized native sources, as well as those borrowed from Europe; how Arguedas, like many other writers in Latin America, assumed a variety of roles (specifically that of ethnologist), that imbue his work with greater scientific integrity.

In addition to the foregoing, linguistic concerns shall also be explored. Arguedas worked within a national tradition that begins with the writings of Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. It is of interest here to study the relationship between the two authors and how both employed language and indigenous sources to reinforce their authoritative stature. In many regards, Arguedas' preoccupation with his own linguistic and autobiographical credentials point to certain psychological and sociological resonances which are evidenced in all of his novels and stories.

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To the memory of my beloved parents

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I

The Notion of Authenticity in the Latin American Novel

> Every writer is the son of his age. The contradictory tendencies of the age -- the decay of the imperialist period and the democratic protest of the working masses, literary decadence and the yearning for popular roots -- affect the writer in contradictory and criss-cross fashion. It is true, as Marx and Engels observed, that in critical periods of class struggle many of the best ideological representatives of the ruling class separate themselves from it, but this too is a very complicated and contradictory process. Thus it is very difficult for the writer really to free himself from the currents and fluctuations of his time and, within the, from those of his class.[1]

Although it is true that any artist, in order to be successful, must credibly render his or her own condition, it would seem that the history of modern Latin American fiction has pursued a path that ever seeks to attain "the authentic."

In Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, this particular quest has often focused on the unique qualities of natural landscape and environment. The sparse indigenous populations in these countries have been depicted historcially, for example in Alonso Ercilla's 16th century epic of conquest and subjugation in Chile, La Araucana. In modern literature, works produced in South America's southern cone have in fact often dealt with the theme of isolation from the European culture that served as their intellectual source. In this respect the urbane dreamscapes of Sábato, Borges, Cortázar and Puig, although marked with their own brands of reality and unreality uniquely reflective of Buenos Aires, are so much an extension of modern European traditions. The novels of the Chilean José Donoso are steeped in allusions to European literary and artistic works. Even Pablo Neruda, who was oftentimes seen as a voice of conscience speaking for all of Latin America's peoples, is very much an international writer, equally at home composing poetry on Machu Picchu as on Rangoon, Burma.

Elsewhere in Latin America, writers have been pitted in a more visceral dual process of self-discovery and discovery of the world around them. A world, which by its complex and pluricultural nature, has demanded a continual strategy of renaming and recreating. Those tools and traditions provided solely by the Occident reaped only partial successes. Writers have discovered that the surrounding physical reality alone -- flora and fauna, topography, meteorological conditions --

bore no exact antecedents in terms of European depiction, that the words to express, evoke or even name these elements were sorely lacking in the occidental languages they had inherited. Furthermore, sociological aspects made the hemisphere unique -- in some countries, the mass of the population continued in varying manner or degree to perpetuate customs, beliefs and languages that were wholly indigenous to the New World. Within this context, the novelist has arrived with an essentially alien genre. The task, which can be readily traced through its historical development, has been to adapt those codes bequeathed by European literary tradition to the demands of Latin America's own autochthonous reality.

> ...resulta que ahora nosotros, novelistas latinoamericanos, tenemos que nombrarlo todo -- todo lo que nos define, envuelve y circunda; todo lo que opera con energía de <u>contexto</u> -- para situarlo en lo universal.[2]

The process Carpentier refers to here, that of naming -- to the primacy of the word in defining one's own universe -- has its own interesting syncretic precedents in the Book of Genesis (the European tradition) and in the New World's own book of creation, the Maya-Quiche <u>Popol Vuh</u>. (Tedlock's translation of the <u>Popol Vuh</u> opens, "This is the beginning of the Ancient word."[3]) Such cultural parallels are of course

numerous. Ernst Cassirer informs us:

> The original bond between the linguistic and the mythico-religious consciousness is primarily expressed in the fact that all verbal structures appear as <u>also</u> mythical entities, endowed with certain mythical powers, that the Word, in fact, becomes a sort of primary force, in which all being and doing originate. Among the texts which Preuss has collected among the Uitoto Indians there is one which he has adduced as a direct parallel to the opening passage of St. John, and which in his translation certainly seems to fall in with it perfectly: 'In the beginning,' it says,' the word gave the Father his origin.'[4]

Carpentier has ascribed the creation of the New World in linguistic terms to Columbus. In effect, the explorer is responsible for discovering, but also for rendering the New World as a real entity, verbally, for the Europeans. With Columbus' words, the hemisphere comes into being for the Europeans. In Carpentier's novel, <u>El arpa y la sombra</u>, Columbus muses:

> Habia que describir esa tierra nueva. Pero, al tratar de hacerlo, me hallé ante la perplejidad de

> quien tiene que nombrar cosas totalmente distintas de todas las conocidas -- cosas que deben tener nombres, pues nada que no tenga nombre puede ser imaginado, mas esos nombres me eran ignorados y no era yo un nuevo Adán, escogido por Criador, para poner nombres a las cosas. Podía inventar palabras ciertamente; pero la palabra sola no muestra la cosa, si la cosa no es de antes conocida.5

Carpentier's statement regarding the role of the novelist also points to a factor that has been elusive to many Latin American writers prior to this century -- that of universality. Again, the demands of fictional representation have only been successfully met, i.e. universally accomplished, when the author has managed to fully grasp not only physical (external) and psychological (internal) reality, but also mastered the linguistic tools most appropriate to those realities. Both the European and aboriginal American traditions indicate that there is a power inherent in the very process of naming, that there is in fact a sanctity to the words themselves, that language is imbued with a power to conjure. But as Carpentier also states, how can something be conjured if its existence is unknown externally, or universally? Does the Latin American author always run the risk of creating regional literature?

In contemporary Latin America, specifically in those

nations that maintain large indigenous populations, the process of naming, and thereby conjuring or representing, has also necessitated a parallel process of resuscitating and restructuring. Even though in Peru (as in Ecuador, Bolivia, Paraguay, Guatemala and Mexico) the imprints of past native cultures are to varying extents alive, if not healthy, much has been chipped, submerged, diluted. Some authors have chosen, almost mournfully, to represent the diminished native reality as a kind of phantom civilization that haunts the present. Many works, in an arguably accurate rendering of the contemporary cultures themselves, are populated by specters. Juan Rulfo's Pedro Páramo, which depicts a town inhabited entirely by ghosts, as well as Asturias' less lugubrious Hombres de Maíz and Mulata de Tal, are examples of this tendency. In Rulfo's novel it can be argued that the ghosts are not necessarily those of the indigenous past, but those of the Mexican revolution -- a more recent chapter in that country's bloody history. The presence of death and its attendant phantoms is also a manifestation of the persistence of certain native ideologies and customs. As Octavio Paz states with regard to Mexican society:

> También para el mexicano moderno la muerte carece de significación. Ha dejado de ser transito, acceso a otra vida que la nuestra. Pero la intrascendencia de la muerte no nos lleva a eliminarla de nuestra

> vida diaria. Para el habitante de Nueva York, París o Londres, la muerte es la palabra que jamás se pronuncia en los labios. El mexicano, en cambio, la frecuenta, la burla, la acaricia, duerme con ella, la festeja, es uno de sus juguetes favoritos y su amor más permanente. Cierto, en su actitud hay quizá tanto miedo como en la de otros; mas al menos no se esconde ni la esconde; la contempla cara a cara con impaciencia, desdén o ironía: "si me han de matar mañana, que me maten de una vez." 6

Among the Incas, a religious practice which persisted well after the Conquest, and which the Spanish colonizers fought hard to abolish, was that of the "panaca" and the cult of the mummy.

> In pre-Inca Peru ... if a man killed another householder, he could take away from that man's "ayllu" [extended family] as much of his "chacra" or tilled land as was defined by a slingstone's flight. What completed the deceased party's alienation from his ayllu was the custom whereby the victor would keep his dried body as a highly valued possession in his own house. The mummy was dutifully fed and in fact treated with great

> tenderness. In this way the murderer exercised a hold over the dead man's family which of course could not exist apart from the paternal mummy; in some curious way the mummy was still thought to possess both house and "chacra." 7

Curiously enough, for all the Spaniards' vehemence in abolishing this and other indigenous practices, the visitor to modern-day Lima is confronted in that city's cathedral by the strange spectacle of Pizarro's mummified remains, preserved and very visibly displayed in a glass coffin.

In the "quest for authenticity," as Jean Franco refers to it, the Latin American writer has often had to assume a variety of functions outside the more specific domain of fiction. As we shall see in the case of José María Arguedas, and as is evidenced in the career of Miguel Angel Asturias, the writer of fiction has also acted as ethnologist, social commentator, folklorist. Both writers not only shared these concurrent careers, but have had their own small share in the task of legitimizing the indigenous cultures within their own countries. For both writers, language has served as a primary tool in this undertaking. Asturias was responsible for producing his own Spanish translation of the Popol Vuh, while studying anthropology at the Sorbonne during the 1920's. He also published Leyendas de Guatemala, which represent his own personalized transformations of Maya-Quiché legends.

Arguedas transcribed and translated the Canto Kechwa (1938), a series of Quechua songs, as well as Canciones y cuentos del pueblo Quechua (1949), and the Himnos Quechuas catolicos cuzqueños (1955).

More broadly, both authors represent a growing emergence during this century of writers whose ability to speak indigenous languages has extended the possibilities of "authentic" literary representation. While others in this category have published and prospered (Augusto Roa Bastos, Gustavo Alfredo Jácome), few have shown either such strong ethnological backgrounds, or left such a solid imprint in the history of modern Latin American literature.

As already suggested, the search for the "authentic," as both theme and objective, is manifested as a process that focuses its gaze both inward -- to the autobiographical, the psychological, the subjective -- and outward -- to the cultural, the sociological, the political and finally the universal. Antonio Prieto relates:

> Toda novela es una unidad sistemática surgida por la oposición de una estructura objetiva (la sociedad) y una estructura subjetiva (el autor), y propone, como generador del hecho novelístico, un acto de rebeldía que la segunda estructura asume contra la primera.8

The contemporary Latin American novel is almost never divorced from the society that surrounds it, even if the relationship between the individual and society is portrayed as dysfunctional. The term "authentic," and the posture implied therein, belies a standpoint that is realist in nature, though highly idealist in motivation. The implication is, of course, that there exists some commonly held consensus with regard to external, physical reality as well as with regard to the means by which this accepted reality can in fact be most accurately represented. If either of these positions are to be accepted as true, why have writers been so quick to condemn their predecessors? What qualities designate a work as appreciably authentic? Will accepted notions regarding authenticity persist or be abandoned? This standpoint is the result of certain common factors in Latin American culture and society, it is also confused by the often conflicting influences that have shaped the hemisphere's literature over the centuries. In The Modern Culture of Latin America, Jean Franco states:

> Whereas the European writer, working from within a tradition, was able to extend his vision by the gradual acquiring of new technical terrain, no such possibility was open to the Latin American, who tended to borrow whatever instrument seemed most suited to his purpose and then abandon this when

> some new situation arose. But, most frequently, Latin-American experience could not be fitted into European moulds. In this case, the writer had to abandon Europe and strike out boldly on his own: a difficult task and one which frequently made him ill at ease. The writer for whom the recording of a unique American experience was so urgent as to require him to abandon European forms was almost invariably under the necessity of justifying himself for paying more attention to the content than the form." 9

Whereas, as Carpentier has stated, the Latin American writer found him or herself with the primogenial task of having to name everything, the tools available for this task -- the language, the genres -- were those which had been cast by European tradition.

During the 19th century, writers in the Americas borrowed freely from Europe (there was no general perception of any other possible source to be tapped) -- their works were heavily infused with Romantic portrayals of landscape and society, and like the Exoticist and Costumbrista models they drew upon, they depicted a world which was essentially external and alien -- they were tourists in their own home. In many respects, this tendency has continued to the present day.

> Of all the writers of the time, probably José Carlos Mariátegui realized more clearly than any other the connexion between Indianism and the European fashion for exotic art. In one of his Siete ensayos (1928), he associated Indianism in Latin-American literature with the European cult of the exotic, which he declared was a sign of decadence. However, he was far from condemning Latin-American Indianism merely because it received its first impetus from a declining Europe. He believed that, in Peru, the movement was a healthy one for it meant that, at last, novelists and short-story writers were undertaking the reinstatement of the Indian.10

The foregoing statement by Franco reflects the fact that this tendency to appropriate European models was in fact the predominant reality into this century. Her reference to the term "Indianism," however, may lead to some confusion since it is employed as a blanket term for both the Indianista and Indigenista movements, which were not concurrent either historically or ideologically. The distinction between these movements, as well as their implications in the work of Arguedas, will be explored later on. In 1952, in an article entitled "El complejo cultural en el Perú y el Primer Congreso de Peruanistas," Arguedas proposed the following:

> Un arraigado perjuicio europeizante, inculcado desde la niñez, como fruto de una tradición muy antigua e ininterrumpida, se diluye en la médula del hombre nacido en las ciudades peruanas, especialmente en Lima. Por esta causa desconoce el país; y cuando lo visita, especialmente el sujeto formado en la capital, cruza por los deslumbrantes paisajes de la múltiple geografía peruana más como un observador que como un paisano.
>
> ... Es quizá este fenómeno de desarraigo el que puede explicarnos la rápida desadaptación que en algunos espíritus débiles de nuestros países causan -- especialmente en estos años -- la permanencia en Europa y la elección exclusiva de la literatura y artes plásticas europeas como modelos de trabajo.11

In works, such as La vorágine, written by José Eustasio Rivera in 1929, native reality is measured entirely on European terms.

> ¡Nada de ruiseñores enamorados, nada de jardín versallesco, nada de panoramas sentimentales! Aquí, los responsos de sapos hidrópicos, las malezas de cerros misántropos, los rebalses de canos perdidos ...

> Aquí, de noche, voces desconocidas, luces fantasmagóricas, silencios fúnebres. Es la muerte, que pasa dando la vida.[12]

Rivera's terrifying depiction of the Orinoco basin bears the dark and hallucinatory tone characteristic of a very outmoded Romanticism. Nature is seen as a holistic extension of the psyche, but only in its refraction of the protagonist's near madness and alienation.

Part of Rivera's powerlessness before the immensity of his natural surroundings is related to the impotence of his language. Nature cannot be rendered in European terms. Rivera lacks the appropriate language to fit or describe the environment, therefore, by extension, everything is described in the negative, in terms of what the jungle is not. The impotence of language is a theme often found in Romantic works. We may compare what Chateaubriand experiences when faced by the awe-inspiring Niagara:

> Je ne pouvais communiquer les pensées qui m'agitaient à la vue d'un désordre si sublime. Dans le désert de ma premier existence, j'ai été obligé des personnages pour la décorer; j'ai tiré de ma propre substance des êtres que je ne trouvais pas ailleurs, et que je portais en moi. Ainsi j'ai placé des souvenirs d'Atala et de Rene aux bords de

> la cataracte de Niagara, comme l'expression de sa tristesse.[13]

Rivera's view of nature as chaotic or malevolent is of course not unique to Latin America. One may be reminded of the German Romantic painters -- of the hypnotic precision of Friedrich's landscapes (wherein the human figure is usually positioned as an outsider), of the darker reveries of the Symbolists (wherein the nightmare is very often embraced), of the dramatic ways in which nature is employed in the Gothic novel. Irving Babbitt writes:

> It should be plain from what has already been said that the romanticist tends to make of nature the mere plaything of his mood. When Werther's mood is cheerful, nature smiles at him benignly. When his mood darkens, she becomes for him a "devouring monster," When it grows evident to the romanticist that nature does not alter with his alteration, he chides her at times for her impassibility; or again he seeks to be impassible like her, even if it can be so only at the expense of humanity.[14]

In literature, depictions like those of Rivera have been numerous. More interestingly, the use of nature as a malevolent force often occurs as a metaphor for the

ideological impasse formed between Western "rationalism" and Non-Western "irrationalism." This dichotomy may have nothing to do specifically with Romanticism. Such is the case in Melville's "Las Encantadas," in many of the novels of Greene, Maugham, Conrad and Lawrence, in Theroux's Mosquito Coast, Naipaul's Bend in the River, Wiggins' John Dollar, and even José Donoso's Casa de campo.

In North America, the writer's experience of nature has been largely molded by certain Enlightenment notions that prevailed during the early years of continental expansion. It may also be argued that North American topography, climate, even flora and fauna, were more closely related to those found in Europe. In The Machine in the Garden, Leo Marx suggests:

> In its simplest, archetypal form, the myth [of a new beginning] affirms that Europeans experience a regeneration in the new World. They become new, better, happier men -- they are reborn. ... In most versions the regenerative power is located in the natural terrain: access to undefiled, bountiful, sublime Nature is what accounts for the virtue and special good fortune of Americans. It enables them to design a community in the image of a garden, an ideal fusion of nature and art.[15]

Rivera would seem to have been influenced by this same

objective, there can be no regenerative power, however, in a natural realm that is as overpowering and incomprehensible as the Orinoco rain forest. Interestingly, Rivera's depiction of the jungle refers pointedly to what Marx speaks of as the ideal fusion of nature and art (i.e. - his use of the adjective "versallesco," of "jardines sentimentales," and "ruiseñores") and how it resists transplanting to a South American context.

We may affirm that in Latin America the individual has been depicted as alien to his or her own physical environment from the time of the first European chroniclers until the 20th century. This has been true precisely because the rational, empirical mind of Europe was in diametrical opposition to the aboriginal realities of the hemisphere. Attempts to understand man in relationship to the environment were always posited from a European vantage point. In many regards this vantage point has not disappeared, nor does it seem likely to do so, since the dichotomies that mark Latin American society have likewise persisted. Writers such as Vargas Llosa, and even García Márquez, are in many ways the product of a "mestisized" culture in that they do represent a gradual social and ideological synthesis that has occurred over many generations. It may be argued that they too stand outside, as strangers, to the autochthonous realities which they portray.

In the works of Márquez, reality has predominant magical qualities. Unlike Rivera, Márquez shows no particular

ideological bias in the face of Nature; he stands on somewhat neutral ground. Nature, for Márquez, is constantly forming and deforming -- it is a dynamic force that is unquestionably greater than those inhabiting it. In this regard, Márquez portrays a vision of Nature closely paralleled to what we find in the Popol Vuh -- natural forces are as often calamitous and destructive as they are beneficent and capable, at least, of instilling a great sense of awe and wonder. Although, at face value, this would seem to be an ideological about-face from what we find in La vorágine, the notion that the rational, Occidental mind is at odds with the Latin American environment still persists. Márquez has borrowed one element from the native world view -- an animistic conception of Nature -- however, this conception is in itself hollow or unspecified; its employment may be largely for aesthetic purposes. Humanity is perceived, once again, as being caught in a realm of phantoms -- natural forces very vividly exist, however they have become divested of their specific (or named) animistic identity.

The simplified equation that Nature is in its essence magical, is certainly shared by many other Latin American writers (notably, Carpentier, Asturias, Roa Bastos). In the sense that this equation is largely borrowed from native American conceptions, it may be understood as an attempt, by dint of faith, to bridge the impassable chasm that stretches between the Occidental world and the indigenous one.

Carpentier refers to this act of faith as the very source of Magical Realism, or using his own terminology "lo real maravilloso."

> ... lo maravilloso comienza a serlo de manera inequívoca cuando surge de una inesperada alteración de la realidad (el milagro), de una revelación privilegiada de la realidad, de una iluminación inhabitual o singularmente favorecida de las inadvertidas riquezas de la realidad, percibidas con particular intensidad en virtud de una exaltación del espíritu que lo conduce a un modo de "estado limite". Para empezar, la sensación de lo maravilloso presupone una fe.[16]

In Pazian terms, the marvelous or magical is understood as an aspect of the submerged indigenous order that is constantly rising forth through the veneer of imposed Occidental culture. As Paz sees it: "Any contact with the Mexican people, however brief, reveals that the ancient beliefs and customs are still in existence beneath Western forms."[17]

There is nevertheless a rather idealistic aspect to much of this. For many intellectuals, Carpentier's act of faith, seemingly a natural (though privileged) occurrence, an

epiphany, may in practice be deliberate or forced. As for Paz's notion that the indigenous operates as the hemisphere's collective unconscious, in Latin America there has been a long history of repression of native cultures. There remains no guarantee that any aspect of said cultures will inevitably manifest itself or, for that matter, endure. (For the sake of a recent example, one need only consider the vast-scale effects on indigenous culture resulting from "La Matanza" in El Salvador in 1932.)

Within a Peruvian context, Vargas Llosa stands at a distance from the native realm. In fact, it can be argued that El hablador is not ideologically far-removed from Rivera's Vorágine. In Vargas Llosa's narrative, the rain forest is anthropomorphized as seductress, rather than infernal demon. However, in a highly idealized vein, the aboriginal/natural world becomes intellectually superable (even conquerable) to Westernized man, its codes (language, culture) are smoothly appropriated and assimilated. In a sense, El hablador is a revisionist's history of the Conquest. Rather than subduing and destroying the native world, the White man here uses his knowledge and technology to commingle with it and perpetuate it. To this extent, the novel also functions as an idealized mirror of the writer's activities in his own quest for authenticity. The anthropologist (Zuratas/Mascarita), and the artist, are viewed in a messianic light. Vargas Llosa's novel might serve as a Utopian epilogue to Las Casas Destrucción de

las Indias, or Levi-Strauss' Tristes tropiques. With regard to "primitive" culture, Lévis Strauss states:

> In that myth-minded age, Man was no more free than he is today; but it was his own humanness alone that kept him from being enslaved. As he had only a very restricted control over Nature, he was protected, and to a certain degree emancipated, by the protective cushion of his dreams. As and when those dreams turned into knowledge, so did Man's power increase; this gave us, if I may so put it, the "upper hand" over the Universe, and we still take an immense pride in it. But what is it, in reality, if not the subjective awareness that humanity is being more and more sundered from the phsyical universe? The great determining factors in that universe are no longer acting upon us as redoubtable strangers; rather is their operation not now through the intermediary of thought, as they colonize us in the interests of the silent world whose agents we have now become? [18]

Vargas Llosas' anthropologist in El hablador represents, oddly enough, both a romantic and pessimistic response to Lévi-Strauss. In the face of the devastation of the indigenous, primitive world, Mascarita abandons, out of his own "subjective awareness," the university in Lima and dissolves into the role of storyteller to the Machiguenga

tribe. Through Mascarita, the Machiguenga may go on living. On the one hand, Mascarita acts drastically as an agent for Peru's guilty conscience. His act is indeed futile, its reverberations will only be felt directly within the limited scope of one individual responding to the massive and ever-progressing encroachment upon the native realm. The messianic role of the anthropologist is also historically related to the melding of religion and ethnography during the early stages of colonization in the New World. Here, however, Vargas Llosas creates a strictly European narrative of postlapsarian wish fulfillment. Out of futility and exasperation, humanity's only recourse is to abandon civilization and return to Eden.

The attitudes expressed by Latin America's intellectuals, even those who seek to establish an authentic vision with regard to the indigenous population or the hemisphere's telluric aspects, cannot be disengaged entirely from European influences and trends. For example, Carpentier's notions concerning "lo real maravilloso," as well as his investigations into Afro-Cuban music, were very much shaped by the European Symbolists' and Surrealists' affinity toward the irrational, the "convulsive," the sensual, by the Cubists' "rediscovery" of African and other primitive art forms. In this sense, the revitalization of the indigenous in Latin American culture is not merely the product of astute observation or appreciation on the part of the intellectual, or, as Paz would have it, the inevitable resurgence of the

collective unconscious, but of a real participation in European and international trends that have now resulted in the shift of focus inward (and backward), instead of abroad. This in no way devalues the work of individual artists, it merely proves that the process of rediscovery has not been wholly ingenerate.

Such can be stated with regard to the political influences that have conditioned Latin American social and intellectual reality. In the aspiration to forge an independent and appropriate path, Latin Americans had to sift through and experiment with the models provided by Europe or the United States. While the American and French revolutions were the primary inspirations in the initial formation of Latin America's republics, the factor that has probably proven to be of greatest significance in this century has been the advent of Marxism. The repercussions of this last phenomenon have been manifested in the concrete restructuring of political, ideological and aesthetic attitudes.

> In 1934, the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, attended by foreign intellectuals, officially decreed that literature should undertake "the ideological remoulding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of Socialism." Henceforth, Communist writers were to try to portray the class struggle. Since the message of

> Communism was a messianic one, they were to portray not only the misery of the workers but "the solutions to the misery." The imposition of "Socialist realism" on writers tended to cause a split between those who defended the avant-garde's right to experiment and those who believed art should have a more direct social function.[19]

From a capitalist, Western perspective, Socialist Realism has often been derided for stressing certain doctrinaire or didactic elements, for the often dogmatic nature of works produced by its advocates, for the bias shown toward content over form. This assessment may also have much to do with the (relatively modern) Occidental notion that artistic creation is a highly individualized activity -- that the act of creation should not be called upon to serve any other cause than that determined individually by the artist. Further, many adherents of Socialist Realism have been officially lauded by regimes not on the basis of their works' aesthetic or formal merits, but by how well said works champion the socialist or nationalist cause. It may even be argued that the best works of Socialist Realism are those which were produced outside of communist regimes. In Latin America, this last point is easily justified. Socialist Realism has been used as a tool, not as an end in itself, for the most successful works that demonstrate a clear political bias. Here we cite the

example of the Mexican muralists, as well as the best works produced within the Indigenista movement.

The Cuban revolution, which during its early years was very meticulous in its nurturing of the arts, was viewed as a tremendous inspiration to Latin Americans in a vast number of fields. This was true, generally, not for the great artists the revolution produced but politically for its defiance to the imperialist order, for its concept of social equality, in its initial implied humanism. With regard to Cuba, Arguedas stated:

> Allí encontré la demostración viva de cómo es posible organizar una sociedad donde todas las personas tengan oportunidad de producir lo más posible. Y donde, sobre todo, la fraternidad es ley: allí el mozo del hotel es igualmente nuestro compañero, como lo es el primer secretario del partido comunista o el presidente de la República. En fin, en Cuba vi, viví el aire de un país en que la capacidad de crear y trabajar está destinada a hacer posible la realización plena de todos los seres humanos.[20]

Silverio Muñoz, in his work, <u>José María Arguedas y el mito de la salvación por la cultura</u>, points out that Marxism enabled many Latin Americans, and specifically Peruvians, to

reconsider the indigenous condition along terms of class struggle.

> La cuestión del indio, más que pedagógica, es económica. ¿Cómo resolverla? La condición del indígena puede mejorar de dos maneras: o el corazón de los opresores se conduele al extremo de reconocer el derecho de los oprimidos, o el ánimo de los oprimidos adquiere virilidad suficiente para escarmentar a los opresores.[21]

In this same vein Luis Valcárcel states:

> El socialismo nos ha enseñado a plantear al problema indígena en nuevos términos. Hemos dejado de considerarlo abstractamente como problema étnico o moral para reconocerlo concretamente como problema social, económico y político. Y entonces lo hemos sentido, por primera vez, aclarecido y demarcado.[22]

As we shall see later on, the question of redefining the role of the Indian on purely economic or class terms proved especially problematic to Arguedas. What was understood as Marxism's most valuable contributions -- the dialectic of

class structure, the didactic purpose of art -- would be considered and reconsidered, and on a strictly dogmatic basis, largely abandoned. Regardless of whether Arguedas was to view the condition of the Indian from an abstract or personalized vantage point, the problem of finding a solution to that condition remained for him his final frustration.

The role of the artist in contemporary Latin America has been one of great affiliation with the national cause. For this reason, it would seem that Socialist realism posited itself as part of a truly seductive crusade.

Possibly the greatest problem in applying Marxist ideology to those nations that have indigenous populations is, ironically, one that is also perceived as being endemic to capitalism -- that of cultural homogenization. Marx and Engels wrote, of course, with a specific context in mind -- that of industrialized Europe. Marxist theory, by insinuating that all social ills arise from the oppression of the proletariat, ignores other more complex and individual considerations. In praxis, by including the Indian as a vital and equal factor in the national economy, and by understanding this inclusion on purely economic terms, there exits the risk of destroying or suppressing traditional and distinctive features that form the very foundation of Indian identity. Arguedas, although never abandoning his admiration for Cuba, his affiliation with some brand of socialism, or his denunciation of the American imperialism that replaced Spain's colonization as the external

oppressing force, began to understand the limitations of Marxist orthodoxy.

> En las naciones descendientes del imperio incaico y de España existen problemas sociales frente a los cuales el escritor consciente del valor de ser humano, ha de sentirse forzosamente comprometido. Se ha pretendido que estos problemas solo pueden resolverse de una manera radical y sectaria, es decir, destruyendo la parte de la población que se considera responsable del tratamiento infligido a más de cuatro millones de personas inocentes. Pero hay escritores que se oponen resueltamente a este procedimiento, y consideran urgente conseguir, en la medida de lo posible, que esos monstruos se humanicen. Por fortuna, la mayor parte de los intelectuales ha abandonado ya su ciego escepticismo, y se ha creado un movimiento llamado "humanismo socialista", que sigue esta corriente, pero que las dos facciones ya citadas tratan de torpedear.[23]

Certain elements of Socialist Realism continue to exert a tremendous influence in Latin American literature, although perhaps on a less formalized level. The example of the Mexican

muralists might aid us to better understand this persistence. As has already been argued, the development of modern Latin American literature has represented a continual quest for "the authentic." This quest is largely motivated by the Latin American obsession with self-definition. Self-definition here, however, is not to be equated solely with psychological exploration; the individual, the self, is subsumed as a mere integer within the encompassing social and political framework. On the one hand, this view is characteristic of how the indigenous cultures understood the role of the individual -- as dependant on, or enmeshed in, the larger natural, social and spiritual orders. In Socialist Realism, the individual is perceived in a similar morphological vein. For the Socialist Realist, self-definition is equatable with definition of the struggle or the cause. In the murals of Diego Rivera, for example, we are faced with a grandiose synthesis of all the foregoing elements -- Mexican self-definition is posited as a hybridized, continuous process of becoming. Here the individual is depicted as one integral factor in a broad and teeming tapestry. The artist is not seen as alienated or standing outside this vast spectacle -- he or she becomes a vital, perhaps humbled, component in the forging of national self-conception.

In Latin America the artist does not tend to be treated by society with the same kind of ambivalence, for better and for worse, shown in the United States or even in Europe. In

Mexico, Rufino Tamayo's recent death, for example, was commemorated as an event of national mourning. The West's assessment of Latin American artists often misunderstands this more holistic conception of artist and society. When we evaluate Diego Rivera's work on strictly Western or European terms, the wealth of references and influences becomes lost.

> Having studied the themes in Modern Mexican mural paintings we find the following facts: the painters began with subjects derived from the traditional iconography, either Christian or frankish, and often literally copied from them. ... To all this outdated religious imagery very nineteenth-century liberal symbols are added. Freedom with its Phrygian cap and the indispensable broken chains ... very ancient symbols of the 'Bourgeoisie, enemy of progress' types still play a prominent part in murals, represented by pot-bellied toffs in top hats, or by pigs, jackals, dragons or other monsters, so well-known and familiar that they are as inoffensive as the plumed serpent. [24]

Edward Lucie Smith signals Rivera's debt to native influences, however these are glossed over in favor of the more evident, or recognizable, European ones:

> Rivera's style, unlike the expressionistic

> mode of his two colleagues and rivals, continued to show strong traces of Cubism in its compressed planes and blocky forms, but avoided anything hermetic and drew heavily on pre-Columbian imagery. Rivera also made use of other sources, not so freely acknowledged. One was Gauguin. Gauguin in the South Seas, claiming to record what he saw, but in fact largely inventing an aboriginal dream world, was a potent force in Latin American art for at least thirty years, from the 1920s onward.[25]

While Smith's assertions are no doubt justified, he ignores the likeness in figuration and spatial conception in Mayan painting (so like Rousseau and Gauguin), and Rivera's knowledge of Toltec and Zapotec sculpture. The discovery of the frescoes at the Mayan site of Bonampak in 1946, for example, had a tremendous impact on Mexican intellectuals. More interesting however is the analogous way in which mural painting functions in both contemporary Mexico and ancient Maya society.

> Maya buildings functioned like huge billboards, manifesting religious and political propaganda for the elite who commissioned them. They were also the stage fronts for the rituals vital to the sustenance of society as a whole.

> Through the symbolic information carried by sculpture and painting around and within the architecture, the framework of ritual was defined in terms of the larger Maya cosmos, the history of the site and region and the personal actions, authority and ancestry of Kings.[26]

The murals stand at the heart of the Maya and Mexican polis; they adorn the chambers or patios of structures that symbolize both societies' governing powers; they depict both societies' struggle with self-definition, and in so doing, draw references to how the cyclical, mythical past tenaciously reemerges in the historic present. By positioning the muralists' work at the very center of Mexican society, in the secular temples of government, an official embracing of the native heritage becomes sanctioned.

In literature, Socialist Realism has had its impact, not merely because it provided a stage on which to play out the details of contemporary Latin American class struggle, but also because it could be used as a point of departure, as an ingredient for other hybridized forms that would incorporate the strongest indigenous and Occidental influences. Specifically, the prevalence of the historical novel can be seen as a very logical phenomenon in this light. Carpentier writes:

> Fue primeramente Bernal Díaz del Castillo "el soldadote inspirado," convertido en cronista, quien nos ha dado con su Verídica historia de la conquista de la Nueva España, la primera novela de caballería real de todos los tiempos. Con Bernal Díaz la función del escritor se define en el Nuevo Mundo; ocuparse de lo que le concierne adelantarse a su época, asiendo su imagen debía pues cumplir una de las tareas que incumben al escritor actual, y sobre todo al novelista, si bien en esa época solamente los novelistas de la Picaresca fueron verdaderos novelistas en el mundo.[27]

In this regard, the first texts produced after the conquest established a tradition of historical narrative. Among the extant indigenous sources, the Mayan Chilam Balam is also a historical narrative.

> The history of the Itza is complicated by its deep integration with the cyclical prophecy-history preserved in the books of Chilam Balam of Yucatan. These books were written in the Maya language, using the Roman alphabet, during the colonial period; they are named after a "Jaguar Prophet" (or prophets) believed to have foreseen the Spanish conquest, Much of their content came from

> hieroglyphic codices banned or burned by the Spaniards. They are filled with dates in the Maya "short count" and associated events, both real and foretold.[28]

Arturo Torres Rioseco refers to the "documentary value"[29] that has characterized the Latin American novel of the 19th and 20th centuries. For a people concerned or even obsessed with forging an identity from clearly disparate elements, it seems logical that the historical narrative, as well as realism, would prove invaluable and preferred tools. We should point out, however, that the first historians of the New World, the chroniclers of colonial exploits, did not produce what we deem today as objectively historical texts. As Carpentier and others have claimed, Díaz seems to have infused his writing with elements of the heroic epic. Torres Rioseco states:

> But it is also in his strong personalized point of view that Bernal Díaz' worth stands out. He writes with an undisguised vanity of himself, almost a hatred for the overpraised Cortés, and a passionate conviction that the conquest was achieved not by the commander, but by the four hundred soldiers of the expedition. ... Bernal Diaz has been criticized, particularly in our times, for

> these highly original traits. ... Yet Bernal's very lack of artifice, his strong personal bias, lend a peculiar value to his book, making it rather a work of creation than a historical record. In his entire story, told with artless and amazing realism, he has a perfect flair for the dramatic, building up more and more strongly to the final climax. As such it ranks as a masterwork of popular, as distinguished from formal, history.[30]

Latin America's first great native chronicler, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, demonstrates very similar tendencies. As the hemisphere's first indigenous apology, or defense, of pre-Columbian culture, his history of the Inca civilization is a highly idealized recounting of the empire based on somewhat dubious, though oftentimes accurate, sources. In Garcilaso's attempt to vindicate and ennoble the Incas in the eyes of the Spaniards, he often embellishes or glosses over many historical, social and cultural elements.

> Garcilaso's interest in Utopia must have gone far beyond the mere curiosity of a humanist interested in American topics, however ... the Utopian model set an important precedent by rendering a pagan New World culture both intelligible to a European readership and

> acceptable, even praiseworthy, within the context of Christian humanist ideology.[31]

This inclination to refract the indigenous Peruvian condition through a very personalized perspective is echoed centuries later in the work of Arguedas. For Arguedas, although there is a clear division between texts of a fictional and scientific nature, his work as ethnographer, social commentator and novelist often seems informed by the same motivation -- the drive to self-definition. With this in mind, Donald G. Castanien writes:

> The question of truth in history is a difficult one, For the Renaissance historian, as for the Classical historian, truth was not necessarily scientific truth; it is on this rock that so many sixteenth-century histories founder today.
>
> On the whole, Garcilaso followed the standard procedures for writing history. His difference from the academic historians of Spain lies in his unconcealed personal involvement in the history he writes.[32]

Both Garcilaso and Arguedas employ history as a vehicle to convey very specific, even didactic, interests. History

becomes a means by which elements of the writer's own past are resuscitated -- there is a conflation of autobiography and history. The childhood of the individual is fused with an idealized vision of the nation's past.

In the Maya texts, history is constructed like symphonic variations on endlessly repeating cycles. History, myth and divination are inseparable. Similarly, the Mexican muralists' view history as synchronic -- past, present and future are held to together within the same frame, within an eternal mythical present; they are given equal importance and are organically linked.

Torres Rioseco has suggested that while Latin America has produced a relatively small number of noteworthy writers in the sciences, philosophy and criticism, the hemisphere has generated a superabundance of distinguished literary figures.[33] Perhaps this phenomenon has had some relation to the fact that the written tradition in Latin America was founded on hybridized genres. Carpentier might possibly also argue that the realities of Latin America are not most suitably rendered by objective historical narratives.

> Artistic genres now cut across one another, with a complexity that cannot be disentangled, and become traces of false searching for an aim that is no longer given; their sum total is only a historical totality of the empirical (sociological)

conditions for the ways in which each form came into being, but where the historico-philosophical meaning of periodicity is never again concentrated in the forms themselves (which have become symbolic) and where this meaning can be deciphered and decoded from the totalities of various periods, but not discovered in the totalities themselves.[34]

II

José María Arguedas:
Authority, Nostalgia and Political Dogma

> In our sleep and in our dreams we pass through the whole thought of earlier humanity. I mean, in the same way that man reasons in his dreams, he reasoned when in the waking state many thousand of years. ... The dream carries us back into earlier states of human culture, and affords us a means of understanding it better.35

José María Arguedas was born in 1911 in Andahuaylas, a small town in the central Andean department of Abancay. Like the narrator of his novel Los ríos profundos, he was the son of a lawyer/circuit court judge for the Court of First Instance. After the death of his mother, when Arguedas was barely three years old, he spent much of his childhood either in the guardianship of Indian housekeepers and nursemaids or in itineracy with his father through much of the central Peruvian highlands. These details appear time and again like a litany in the wide variety of narratives that Arguedas has authored -- they are perhaps the writer's most important

credentials. Moreover, by very consciously inserting his own autobiographical data in texts that range from novels to ethnographic studies to social commentary, he adds a certain first-person quality to all of his work. The writer's own condition and identity are never absent; they add a very subjective tone which shapes, guides and modifies all of his writing.

> ... mi madrastra me tenía tanto desprecio y tanto rencor como a los indios y decidió que yo había de vivir con ellos en la cocina, comer y dormir allá. Así viví muchos años. Los indios y especialmente las indias vieron en mí exactamente como si fuera uno de ellos, con la diferencia de que por ser blanco acaso necesitaba más consuelo que ellos ... y me lo dieron a manos llenas.[36]

Arguedas' childhood years in the highlands form the basis for all of his earlier narratives. It is here that he develops certain thematic elements which are carried through his entire work; it is here too that he elaborates a somewhat idealized version not only of his own youth but also of the indigenous environment into which he was thrown. One of the myths that has grown from this period, and that has been alternately perpetuated by the author and his critics, is that Arguedas' first language was Quechua, that in fact he did not attain real mastery of the Spanish tongue until his entrance into

college. Enrique González-Manet elaborates:

> Culturalmente, Arguedas es indio. Compartió su vida, aprendió a hablar quechua, y en más de un sentido, sus experiencias fueron tan duras como las de cualquier indio, Su niñez y adolescencia transcurrieron en el desolado paisaje de los Andes, que recorrió durante años en todas direcciones, la mayor parte de las veces a pie. A los 18 años, cuando llegó a Lima, hablaba con dificultad el español y debió sufrir mucho para asimilarse a la lengua y a las costumbres de la Costa.[37]

In response to such assertions, the critic Roland Forgues contends:

> Sa nourrice, Luisa de Paredes, que nous avons rencontrée et interrogée à ce sujet, à Andahuaylas, nous a affirmé que dès son plus jeune âge José María Arguedas s'exprimait aussi bien en espagnol qu'en quechua. Son camarade d'école, Angel Benderu Rodríguez, fils de l'instituteur d'Arguedas a Puquio, nous a confirmé que dès son entrée à l'école du bourg l'écrivain était parfaitement bilingue.
>
> D'ailleurs s'il subsistait encore le moindre

> doute à ce sujet, nous pourrions faire appel à des documents écrits. Si Arguedas n'avait pas été bilingue dès son enfance et s'il n'avait réellement appris à s'exprimer en langue castillane qu'à partir de 12 ans, comme il le dit lui-même, ou dès son entrée à l'université, comme l'ajoutent certains critiques, comment expliquer alors que ses premiers articles de jeunesse, publiés dans Atorcha et dans Inti, alors même qu'il était encore élève au collège Santa Isabel de Huancayo, soient écrits dans une langue castillane exemplaire pour un jeune homme de dix-sept ans? [38]

Forgues does not exactly cast all doubts from this issue. Arguedas' assertion, that he did not speak Spanish until the age of twelve, is at least feasible. In his prologue to Agua and Diamantes y pedernales, Arguedas states that he learned how to speak in Quechua. The prologue is largely concerned with the problems of adapting indigenous speech to works that are written in Spanish. Again, the author is staking much of his credibility here on the culturally and linguistically privileged position he experienced as a child. The whole matter is seen as important because Arguedas continually displays his credentials (native fluency in Quechua, complete immersion in the indigenous culture) so as to establish himself as an as a legitimate intermediary between these two

polarized worlds. The issue of language becomes one of authenticity. It is indeed comparable to the way in which Inca Garcilaso had established his authority as peerless historian of the Inca civilization.

> Garcilaso claimed a particularly favored position for writing the history of Tahuantinsuyo, as the Incan empire was called. He himself spoke the Indian language and was able to interpret accurately accounts related by the Indians. He was able to question his informants to bring out information that would otherwise have been lost.[39]

Although Garcilaso did not write his Comentarios as an eyewitness to actual historical events, his claims to royal ancestry (reinforced by an assumed name), and his participation in the generational transmission of his nation's oral history seemed sufficient enough to place him in an auspicious position and render his work credible.

> The object of Garcilaso's exposition in the Comentarios reales is Inca history and culture, not as unprocessed historical record but as discursive structure, for he realizes that Inca history was already in textual form, as an oral narrative stored in the collective memories of his Inca

> elders. Therefore he is careful to present his own knowledge of the Inca past as one which was acquired in the form of a story told to him by his great-uncle at one of the frequent family gatherings.[40]

Although Arguedas' own authority has not been questioned by many critics (in fact, as we have seen, this authority has been indeed embellished and lionized), the entitlement he establishes through his privileged position in first-hand knowledge of indigenous culture and society may also be seen as a rhetorical device. Like Garcilaso, he is driven to revise and correct errors his predecessors have made in their depiction of the Andean world. Both authors are motivated by a didactic approach, although this approach is applied with utter decorousness to two seemingly disparate genres. Arguedas writes:

> Cuando llegué a la universidad leí los libros en los cuales se intentaba describir a la población indígena: los libros de López Albujar y de Ventura García Calderón. Me sentí tan indignado, tan extrañado, tan defraudado, que consideré que era indispensable hacer un esfuerzo por describir al hombre andino tal como era y tal como yo lo había

> conocido a través de una convivencia muy directa ...
>
> A medida que fui aprendiendo la literatura occidental, y leyendo los clásicos, especialmente españoles y rusos, decidí escribir, no con el propósito muy expreso de publicar, sino de desahogar mi estado de amargura, de descontento, casi de irritación contra esta descripción totalmente falsa de la población indígena.[41]

What is especially intriguing about the author's professed motivation is that it arose, as he claims above, not from a sense of rage at the conditions of the indigenous populace, but at the way in which these people had been depicted in literature. To Arguedas, the narrative account was as important, as inflammatory, as the reality it interpreted. Again we are confronted with the apparent fallacy that conflates and enmeshes historical or sociological commentary, reality, and fiction. Arguedas' legitimacy and authority are based on the fact that he witnessed and therefore he knew. Strangely enough, this fact also establishes a very subjective relationship with reality -- Arguedas suggests that the writer's own subjectivity is negligible and that his work is merely a transmission of unfiltered, unadulterated verity.

As we have already seen, the conflation of historical chronicle and fiction is a legacy that has been passed down

from both the pre-Columbian and colonial traditions. For Garcilaso, undisputed facts, the objective retelling of historical events, were not enough -- even if he were not to be questioned as an authoritative historian -- the exposition of historical narrative had to be geared to certain ideals, it had to show history not merely as factual, but as exemplary. Arguedas' initial impetus to write is also founded on a desire to provide exemplary texts.

During the time that Arguedas first began to write in the 1930s, Latin American fiction was being charged by certain literary and political influences. José Carlos Mariátegui, founder of the Peruvian Socialist Party, had a considerable impact when his Siete ensayos appeared in 1928. Like Carpentier, Asturias, and many other Latin American writers, Mariátegui had appropriated many of his ideas from recent intellectual developments in Europe. With a sense of real urgency, however, he called upon Latin American writers to focus inward, specifically to the question of the Indian, in order to formulate artistic and political responses that would be truly appropriate to their own unique circumstances. As Jean Franco points out, Mariátegui was the first to propose that a genuine Indian novel could only be written by the Indians themselves.[41]

According to Silverio Muñoz, Mariátegui's greatest value was in how he brought radical European notions to very concrete applications in Peru and the rest of the hemisphere.

> El aspecto más original del análisis de Mariátegui, y cuya actualidad renueven los recientes debates sobre el modo asiático de producción, la constituye la descripción de la sociedad incaica. Mariátegui en efecto establece un paralelismo entre las comunidades agrícolas de los indios peruanos y aquellas comunas de Rusia que habían llamado la atención de Marx y Engels en sus investigaciones sobre formas precapitalistas.[43]

The connection between Marxism, Socialist Realism and the rekindling of interest in native culture and society had already been established. Also, movements in Europe that had less overt connections with Marxist ideology, such as Surrealism, provided additional justification for the revaluation of the indigenous. In the Andean nations, these tendencies had a considerable effect and coincided with the rise of a literary movement known as Indigenismo.

In the 19th century, writers had begun to express great interest in Indian culture and society. This interest was manifested in either a colorful, folkloric approach to Indian themes, or one in which the more dire aspects of the native condition were portrayed in pessimistic, Dickensian terms, with an attempt to elicit Christian sympathy (but without any concrete political response) from the reading public. Such is the case of the so-called Indianist novels of writers like

Peru's Clorinda Matto de Turner. These texts may be seen largely as an extension of European Exoticism, of the Iberian "Costumbristas," such as Gustavo Adolfo Becquer. Although there is an embracing of the primitive as one vein that runs through many 19th century works, depictions of the indigenous population here are generally sentimentalized, always refracted through a European or colonial sensibility. The tradition extends back to the way in which Indians were portrayed by the hemisphere's first European chroniclers, even to Montaigne's essay "Des Cannibales."

Although Matto de Turner is credited by some as being the initiator of the "novela idigenista," in the sense that she is the first to present the Indian as a flesh and blood human being43, her novel Aves sin nido, is so infused with pessimism and Christian redemption, that it leaves no possible resolution to the desperate conditions characteristic of the Indian masses.

> Ah, plegue Dios, que algún día, ejercitando su bondad, decrete la extinción de la raza indígena, que después de haber ostentado la grandeza imperial bebe el lodo de oprobio. ¡Plegue a Dios la extinción ya que no es posible que recupere su dignidad, ni ejercite sus derechos!45

One of the problems inherited by the Indigenista

movement, is the apparent way in which it perpetuates certain characteristics of Indianismo for its own political purposes. Indians, even rural society as a whole, are often typified; characterizations are achieved flatly, without much psychological dimension. It may argued that Socialist Realism does not tend to give much credence to psychological development. Again, we may turn to the analogy of the Mexican muralists. Here, everything is portrayed on the same plane; historical and mythological "type" figures, often from very different periods in history, are unified within the same narrative and temporal space. The desired effect is to render diverse, even inconsonant elements as an indivisible whole -- to render the diachronic as synchronic -- to understand these elements as inseparably entwined in the development of the national cause or identity. In this way, the Indians serve not only as reminders of the ancestral legacy, but they also stand as symbols of the oppressed, regardless of race or historical context, in their struggle for liberation. For Diego Rivera, as for the Indigenista novelists, the oppressor may be perceived interchangeably as Spaniard or Yankee businessman, as corrupt politician or White latifundista. These associations, of course, would make clear to the Latin American that his or her own role in terms of class division has very concrete parallels in terms of cultural division; that economic oppression (externally by Spain or the United States, internally by a corrupt and unjust caste system) meant

in effect that the plight of the Indian was unquestionably the plight of Latin America itself.

The work of Orozco, Rivera and Siqueiros is not merely didactic, its motivation is not purely political. However, these artists stand out on the basis of their own artistic and technical accomplishments, from many less distinguished figures who did sacrifice art in the name of the Socialist cause. Similarly, although Arguedas was to situate his writing along comparable political lines, his work is distinguished, like Rivera's, in that it never loses sight of the individual. In this regard, the subjective, autobiographical nature of Arguedas' work functions as one of its strongest merits. In addition, stylistic, purely aesthetic or formal concerns are not discarded to create two-dimensional novels of thesis. With regard to Indigenismo, Castro Arenas writes:

> ... en los hechos, los cultores del realismo indigenista, más por impericia literaria que por apartamiento de la consigna literaria, obtienen cuadros débiles de la condición social indígena, al ser aplastados los elementos estéticos por el peso excesivo de la proyección ideológica. Esta es la raison d'être del fracaso indigenista. ... en el conjunto del realismo indigenista puede advertirse como resulta perjudicada la novela por la división polar marxista de explotados y explotadores, de

> campesinos y latifundistas malévolos. Sociológicamente, el esquema clasista puede ser correcto. Pero literariamente, novelísticamente, siguiendo este método unicamente se obtiene personajes planos, tipos, caricaturas, esto es personajes sin complejidades interiores, personajes determinados por opresivas premisas ideológicas que anulan su libertad espiritual y los tornan en meros títeres movidos a voluntad por hilos fatales, inexorables, tiránicos.[46]

The political underpinnings of Arguedas' work, his own debt to Indigenismo and Socialist Realism, are clearly appreciable in all of his novels and stories, even if his claims to a purely political motivation seem ambiguous. In the address he presented on receiving Peru's Premio Inca Garcilaso for literature, one year prior to his death in 1969, Arguedas stated:

> En la primer juventud estaba cargado de una gran rebeldía y de una gran impaciencia por luchar, por hacer algo. Las dos naciones de las que provenía estaban en conflicto: el universo se me mostraba encrespado de confusión de promesas, de belleza más que deslumbrante, exigente. Fue leyendo a Mariátegui y después a Lenín que encontré un orden

> permanente en las cosas; la teoría socialista no sólo dió un cauce a todo el porvenir sino a lo que había en mi de energía, le dió un destino y lo cargó aun más de fuerza por el mismo hecho de encauzarlo. ¿Hasta donde entendí el socialismo? No lo sé bien. Pero no mató en mí lo mágico. No pretendí jamás ser un político, no me creí con aptitudes para practicar la disciplina de un partido, pero fue la ideología socialista y el estar cerca de los movimientos socialistas lo que dio dirección y permanencia, un claro destino a la energía que sentí desencadenarse durante la juventud.[47]

The narrative context Arguedas refers to again in this speech is a past (verbally imperfect) one. He was called upon to write due to conditions that existed -- in effect the divisions that lay between the two nations (Indian and Colonial) that sired him, and that led him to be so quickly drawn to the Socialist cause, were either those he perceived in his youth or those which only existed in his youth. Was Arguedas suggesting that class and cultural differences had been resolved in Peru, or was he merely emphasizing that in the present these matters ceased to have the same significance for him? Importantly, Arguedas reminds us that Socialism never destroyed the magical within him. It would seem clear that

Arguedas appreciated the limitations of orthodox Marxism and Socialist Realism.

Arguedas' initial motivation to write, as he asserts, was a corrective one. Arguedas stated that he was impelled to undo the tremendous disservice apparent in the distorted portrayals of indigenous culture and society that had been committed by his predecessors. In Arguedas' association with the Socialist cause, he found a means for ideologically correcting or bridging class and cultural divisions. Arguedas' position as intermediary between the two polarized worlds of White and Indian (of Coast and Sierra, of urban and rural, of present and past) is repeatedly established and, in many regards, resolved in his narratives. In his earlier works, the resolution arises through a somewhat nostalgic resuscitation of the past (Arguedas' childhood), wherein at least on a personalized, autobiographical level, the dichotomy between Indian and White becomes erased. In a somewhat Utopian vein, to the eyes of a small child, the significance of cultural and sociological differences is suspended. These differences begin to impose themselves through maturation and culturation. Individual age in Arguedas' novels is seen as reflective of historical age. In this sense it is significant that the author's happiest time, his period of Arcadian innocence, is spent in the most rural contexts, among the native people. It is only when he grows older that he is impelled to learn another language (which does not fit the reality of his

childhood or the aspects of his adopted native culture), to attend school, eventually to be confronted by the order of the oppressing class.

Arguedas' role as intermediary is significant in a number of ways. Roland Forgues refers to the author's "double marginality"[48], which in the child Arguedas is experienced by the early trauma of his mother's death and his father's abandonment. As a more conscious and mature writer, Arguedas in a sense revenges himself by rejecting the inauthentic Spanish heritage for the adopted, more authentic indigenous culture. This may serve as an explanation for the author's continuous repetition of autobiographical details -- to imbue his childhood with an almost mythic content. Although, because of his whiteness, Arguedas can never hope to be completely embraced by the Indians, his experience of rejection and abandonment provide a fundamental connection with the oppressed underclass. In addition, he can spend the rest of his career forging his own fictional indigenous universe, where his presence, his belonging, even his authority, will never be questioned.

> Si l'on examine le cas de Agua, on se rend compte que le fil connecteur du récit est parfaitement identique dans les trois contes qui composent le volume. Il présente le cheminement d'un personnage

> enfant -- Ernesto dans le premier et dans le troisième contes, et dans le deuxième Juancha -- qui rejette l'univers blanc, auquel il appartient par sa naissance, par sa culture et par sa condition sociale, pour tenter de s'identifier à l'univers indien qui lui est étranger.
>
> Le conflit que présuppose ce cheminement est avant tout d'ordre intérieur et psychique. Il oppose dans l'âme profonde de l'enfant-héros son moi conscient qui le pousse à rejeter son passé qu'il tient pour inauthentique et son moi subconscient qui, malgré lui, l'y rattache constamment.[49]

Over the course of his literary career, beginning with the publication of Agua in 1934 and culminating in 1969 with El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, Arguedas has continually depicted the type of conflict to which Forgues refers. Essentially, like the characters in his earlier works, Arguedas has concerned himself primarily with a rejection of the white universe in preference for the indigenous one. To achieve this, he has had to devote himself to the appropriate use of language, one which employed the vocabulary, cadences, even the syntax of the indigenous Quechua, but which would simultaneously be comprehensible to a Spanish-speaking public. In the journal entries appearing in El zorro de arriba y el

zorro de abajo, Arguedas reflects upon the unswerving path he has followed as a writer, in which he also claims to have largely rejected the literary models of the white universe, contrasting himself with "professional" writers such as Julio Cortázar and Carlos Fuentes.

> ...había decidido hablar hoy algo sobre el juicio de Cortázar respecto del escritor profesional. Yo no soy escritor profesional, ese García Márquez no es escritor profesional. ¡No es profesión escribir novelas y poesías! O yo, con mi experiencia nacional, que en ciertos resquicios sigue siendo provincial, entiendo provincialmente el sentido de esta palabra oficio como una técnica que se ha aprendido y se ejerce específicamente, orondamente para ganar plata. Soy en ese sentido un escritor provincial; sí, mi admirado Cortázar; y errado o no, así entendí que era don João y que es don Juan Rulfo. Porque de no, Juan, que conoce al infinito el oficio, no debería ser pobre. Yo tuve que estudiar etnología como profesión; el Embajador fue médico; Juan se quedó en empleado. Escribimos por amor, por goce y por necesidad, no por oficio.[50]

The idea that Arguedas viewed himself as a "provincial" writer may indeed bear a heavy grain of truth. On the one hand, although his works have been translated into a great

many languages, they nevertheless still exert a sense of exoticism, even opacity, that must be explained to the uninitiated by heavy footnoting. Arguedas may be provincial in the sense that he confines himself within very precise cultural or geographic perimeters. In the foregoing journal excerpt, Arguedas contrasts the notion of "provincial" with "professional," as a way of setting apart those writers who work out of a natural, loving affinity to this activity in opposition to those who view the same as a type of vocation or business. The term "provincial" then can be seen as coequal with "natural," "innate" or even "simple" and "artless." There is a misleading humility to Arguedas' self-conception as "provincial." For the author, the tag "provincial" becomes analogous with "authentic" -- it represents a self-conscious (and therefore paradoxically unnatural) preference for indigenous themes and sources over borrowed, European ones. The provinces in the author's view are where both he and his nation received their primary formation. As has been discussed, the crisis in Peruvian society, which Arguedas documented in both fictional and ethnological works, arises from the ignorance and hostility demonstrated toward the "provincial" by Peru's ruling and intellectual elite. Arguedas' real concern, however, would not seem be the provincial in and of itself, but the dialectic or dialogic nature of culture in Peruvian society, and in Latin America as a whole. The "provincial," like the "cosmopolitan" (or

"universal") cannot be posited as existing in isolation, in some pure or sterile vacuum.

With regard to language, in the introduction to Frances Barraclough's translation of Los ríos profundos, John V. Murra states:

> There are few translations of José María Arguedas into English and fewer still of his longer works done in the sixties; ... Arguedas did not write with us in mind. He was not surprised when a Scottish poet told him he found Los ríos profundos [Deep Rivers] untranslatable. He had given up Quechua in fiction, but he still saw himself as talking not only about the Andean peoples, but for and to them. [51]

Beyond the idea that Arguedas used Quechuan linguistic elements to more authentically render indigenous reality, it should also be stated that language serves a number of important functions for the writer in all of his works.

Firstly, language provides Arguedas with a mnemonic device; by using Quechuan words, rhythm or syntax, he is better able to resuscitate a world that represents both autobiographical and historic past. Regardless of the controversy involving the author's native tongue, it would be impossible for him to breathe life into this narrative world without the use of indigenous linguistic elements, since these

elements constituted such a fundamental part of his understanding of that world.

Also, we may return here the notions established in Alejo Carpentier's Tientos y diferencias, specifically the process of naming and invoking. A knowledge of Quechua would seem inseparable from any profound knowledge of indigenous life, society, topography, flora, fauna, as well as certainly those aspects relating directly to culture such as music, poetry, art, weaving, pottery, etc. These elements may only be called forth by employing Quechua vocabulary since, for the most part, there lack Spanish equivalents to designate them.

As we shall see most vividly in the case of Diamonds and Flint, language exerts, in many instances, not only a rhythmic and poetic quality in Arguedas' works, but it is also tied to certain mythico-religious aspects. This is related to the above-cited concepts of memory, naming and invocation. As examples, we may look to the references the author makes to the large stones where key scenes or ceremonies take place, also to certain other natural elements such as waterfalls and canyons, the kestrel, or the highland ducks. The stones, which we may regard as merely stones, have certain ceremonial attributes which predate even Inca beliefs. Stones were considered to be living entities, to hold the spirit of a place, or even the spirit of the deceased, and were referred to as "huacas" in Quechua. Burr Cartwright Brundage states:

Here in Machu Picchu the Incas worshipped the Earth Mother in her personification as the beautiful and terrible peaks of the Andes. As Coricancha was the cathedral wherein men worshipped specifically the Inca Gods, so Machu Picchu was probably the primate church wherein was revered the colossal "huaca" of the mother of stone, the Andes. Here beat the unhurried heart of all the earth's mountains, audible most clearly to those priestesses of the cult whom we know inhabited the site.[52]

The most significant variation on the "apachita" [strength-giving daemon] type of "huaca" was the "usno." An "usno" was essentially a place of divine appearances and, in consequence, a place of sacrifices. Being a "huaca" itself, it further sanctified whatever was placed on it. Generally it was carved directly out of some rock outcrop and was thus fixed in place.[53]

With regard to "huacas," Steve J. Stern further explains:

The Andean peoples' image of the cosmos seemed plausible, however, not simply because of its internal logic and explanatory power, but also on account of its consistency with known social relationships. The kin groups within a hierarchy of households and "ayllus" paid

homage to parallel networks of "huacas," sacred beings or powers materialized in hills, waters, caves, stones, ancestor mummies (malquis) and so forth. As mythological founders-creators, huacas were ancestors in a social rather than strictly genealogical sense. The entire community or ethnic group worshipped a group of powerful major huacas, including the ... hills or waters venerated as mythological places of origin.54

When we compare this with the contemporary beliefs evidenced in Andean communities, we find that many aspects of ancestral religion continue in more than a superficial or vestigial manner. Gabriel Escobar states:

> Pre-Columbian elements permeate their cosmology, their fertility rituals in relation to cattle and agriculture, and some of their curing practices, Magic and curing combines both Spanish and Andean elements.
>
> Indian cosmology provides the rationale for the fertility rituals and usually explains in supernatural terms many of the aspects of their environment and some of the aspects of man. Great mountain peaks, rivers, caves and valleys possess anthropomorphic spirits and supernatural beings, both good and evil.55

In Diamonds and Flint, such beliefs persist in the form

of the great "kacharpariy-pata" stone which serves as a venerated place where the villagers take their leave, as well as the "auki" pass, which both bear attributes of the "apachita."

Arguedas' use of language points to another interesting factor which may be difficult for some Occidental readers to fully appreciate. For the highland Peruvian, Quechua is a vessel through which an entire universe of ancestral, pre-Columbian beliefs are perpetuated. It is indeed amazing that many aspects of pre-Hispanic culture and society persist and flourish. One is drawn to the hierarchical structures evidenced not only in Diamonds and Flint, but more elaborately in "Agua," Yawarfiesta, Los rios profundos, and Todas las sangres. The author devotes much time to the descriptions of the towns and villages that form the settings for these narratives. Whether in Puquio, San Juan de Lucanas, Abancay, or the nameless provincial capital that is the principal backdrop for Diamonds and Flint, Arguedas provides detailed accounts of the "ayllus" that comprise these municipalities. The employment of this ancient Quechua designation reveals a persistence of kinship and caste beliefs that have only been modified or embellished by the imposition of Occidental culture. With regard to the rural community of Nuñoa, Gabriel Escobar explains:

> The information we have now tends to show that both

> Indians and Mestizos have a Spanish-type bilateral kinship system, similar to that of the Mestizos in the city of Cuzco..., with some modifications due to economic status and stratification. However, such may not represent the kinship of the Indian population, because the patterns of reciprocity dominant among them tend to follow the pre-Columbian pattern.
>
> Our analysis, based on information gathered in the community of Sincata, in the hacienda Chilíhua, in the town of Nuñoa, tends to indicate that wherever you have a more or less permanent nucleus of population, the core of the community is made up of a number of extended families surrounded by a variable number of individuals and couples loosely related to this core.56

In Diamonds and Flint, the "ayllu" is a denomination that I have generally chosen to leave untranslated. The "ayllu" of Alk'amare, where much of the novella's action takes place, is portrayed as one of the town's principal indigenous quarters. The word "ayllu" is employed by Arguedas because it has an ancestral resonance of kinship, and is pitted in contrast to the "barrio de principales," which evokes no such feeling of commonality or relation and merely refers to that part of town where the rich or important mestizo or Spanish inhabitants reside.

The discussion of language should turn lastly to the

relation it bears to music. In Diamonds and Flint, as in other works by the author, music plays a key role. Since the pre-Columbian Andean cultures lacked a written language, literary works of course existed only in oral form. The interweaving of verse, usually in the form of songs, therefore provides Arguedas with the opportunity to infuse his writing with the intoned shards of that pre-Columbian tradition. Of particular interest here, however, is how the indigenous peoples have appropriated and transformed elements of Spanish culture, in many cases creating a unique hybridized form. The residents of Alk'amare are heard reciting the Lord's Prayer, for example, in Quechua (the "Yayayku") over the dead body of Don Mariano. Don Mariano's harp has a special significance in this regard, as it points to, again, the hybridized forms that have resulted from the fusion of the pre-Columbian with the Spanish. (The use of the European bowler hat among Quechua and Aymara women is one such example.) According to Alejo Carpentier, the harp, which is of fundamental importance to the music of Latin America (and which also plays a significant role in Diamonds and Flint), was brought from Spain on one of Columbus' first voyages.[57]

Elsewhere in Diamonds and Flint, songs and "huaynos" form an integral leit motiv. Both the words and music of these "huaynos" are seen as having almost magical powers. The "huaynos" that Mariano sings and plays on his harp simultaneously protect and enslave him, since they have such

a strong effect on the troubled soul of his master, Don Aparicio. The same paradoxical qualities are shown in the "huaynos" that Irma sings.

Arguedas has written that many facets of indigenous culture have a strong attraction to the mestizos and mixed race peoples in Peru's highlands.

> ... in the mountains of Peru, the greater part of the population lives by constant production of art, popular art, in music, ceramics, fabrics. And this production has a profound influence in moulding the spirit of the mestizos and the landowners themselves. Almost all the art in the mountains is the work of Indians. And the mestizos -- those who administer the work of the Indians, those who are engaged in business or law, or are office clerks, and even the landowners -- at heart, they feel very much this native art. And this art affects them because it is the most exact expression of their own sentiments.[58]

The spiritual quality of the "huaynos" is echoed in other works by Arguedas, In "Agua," these songs have an ability to transform the listeners, to restore to them qualities that they had lost or forgotten:

"Utek'pampa
Utek'pampita:
tus perdices son de ojos amorosos,
tus calandrias engañadores cantan al robar,
tus torcazas me enamoran
Utek'pampa
Utek'pampita.

La corneta de Pantaleoncha y nuestro canto reunieron a la gente de San Juan. Todos los indios del pueblo nos rodearon. Algunos empezaron a repetir el wayno en voz baja. Muchas mujeres levantaron la voz y formaron un coro...

... en las caras sucias y flacas de los comuneros se encendió la alegría, sus ojos amarillosos chispearon de contento.[59]

In Diamonds and Flint, the force that this music exerts over Don Aparicio has much to do with a sense of spiritual and cultural purity that he has lost. The music played and sung by Don Mariano evokes a more remote and culturally pure region. In addition to the fact that Arguedas intends to render the subtle differences in regional musical styles and idioms, it is also clear that the author is employing music, and language, for his own very symbolic purposes. With regard to Los ríos profundos, Cornejo Polar writes:

> La adhesión del protagonista al poder y misterio de la música es, sin embargo, inconmovible. Y la música, como la naturaleza, es generosa. La inocencia puede recuperarse: la música religa entonces al hombre con la naturaleza, según ya se ha visto, y lo revierte a la condición primera, a la música misma, a la "materia de lo que yo estoy hecho".[60]

Music is shown by Arguedas as being intrinsically linked with nature. The lyrics of Mariano's "huaynos," as those evidenced in Los ríos profundos and "Agua," deal largely with natural themes and elements. In Diamonds and Flint, great harpists are said to compose their music first at the edge of a waterfall, by listening to the roar of the cascading current. In this regard, music becomes a mere extension of natural forces which are interpreted or channeled through the musician.

In Los ríos profundos, the young narrator, Ernesto, describes the music sung by the tuya, a species of Andean lark. Again, the creations of human art and music are posited as deriving directly from natural sources.

> Su canto transmite el secreto de los valles profundos. Los hombres del Perú, desde su origen, han compuesto música, oyéndola, viéndola cruzar el espacio, bajo las montañas y las nubes, que en ninguna otra región

del mundo son tan extremadas. [61]

The inclusion and reference to other genres within the narrative -- the native "huaynos," "danzas," prayers and poetry; the mythico-religious symbols and anthropomorphic elements of nature, are seen as a means for imbuing the author's fictive portrait of the Andean universe with greater depth and shading. Like the artful placement of mirrors in a garden, Arguedas' enmeshing of these indigenous "texts" alternately expand and erase the temporal and spatial limitations of the narrative. As Octavio Paz relates in Claude Lévi-Strauss, an Introduction:

> Music and myth 'demand a temporal dimension to make their appearance.' Their relation with time is peculiar because they assert it only to negate it. They are diachronic and synchronic: myth tells a story and, like a concerto, unfolds in the irreversible time of the performance; myth repeats itself, re-engenders itself, it is time which turns back on itself -- what happened is happening now and will happen again -- and music 'immobilizes time which is passing ... so that when we listen to it we accede to a sort of immortality.'[62]

While poetry, song and myth (or Arguedas' use of Mariano's "encoded" sash that opens Diamonds and Flint) are

man-made or artificial contrivances, they have the curious effect of infusing these works with a heightened sense of reality. This technique has of course been employed innumerable times in literature and the arts. The insertion of architectonic settings in the paintings of Massaccio and Piero della Francesca resulted in a defiance of the two-dimensional limitations of the painted surface by creating the illusion of perspective and infinite depth. Cervantes' inclusion of real or imagined works of art and literature in Don Quijote created a similar resonance. Here, however, Arguedas posits a fundamental ideological difference between Occidental and Indigenous notions of creation -- that art and nature, man and nature, are organically dependent and interconnected. In this regard too an Andean landscape may be beautiful or evocative to the Western reader, whereas to the Indian its every stone, crevice and lichen pulses with meaning. In them, the Indian sees his ancestry, his origin; they continually furnish him with restorative and creative energy. The crisis, then, of acculturation occurs also as the Indian world begins to fill with the hollow detritus of the West.

> A la orilla del totoral grande y con más agua, unos hombres valientes construyeron un campo empedrado. Maxwell ayudó. Tantearon el piso de agua. Era arena fuerte. Instalaron allí un gran lavadero de camiones y carros que luego se convirtió en un taller de compostura

> y después en fábrica de carrocerías. Le pusieron un letrero bien clavado entre dos maderos altos: "Fábrica de Carrocerías Inka Bala". Hizo gracia; parodiaba a la fábrica de aguas gaseosas "Inka-Cola", que, de acuerdo o no con la "Coca-Cola", había hecho desaparecer las pequeñas fábricas de todos los pueblos.[63]

The works of Arguedas follow an autobiographical trajectory -- his earlier writings provide us with the less complicated, innocent evocations of his childhood and adolescence in the highlands of Abancay; later his narratives become more and more concerned with the problems of mestization and acculturation, as seen both in the Peruvian Andes and coastal cities. El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, the author's last work, presents a sordid and disembodied cacophony of alienation and cultural chaos. Here the plaintive strains of the Andean "huaynos" and "danzas" have been supplanted by the abrasive, imported rhythms of rock and roll that blare in the seedy netherworld of Chimbote's "Gato Negro" night club. The choppy, disarming narrative is interspersed with Arguedas' four journal entries which comprise the final critical and confessional ruminations of the author prior to his suicide.

At one time Arguedas apparently believed that the plight of Indian culture need not be a tragic one. In Diamonds and

Flint, as in Yawarfiesta and Los ríos profundos, the mestizo is shown as quite often preserving and venerating indigenous traditions. It was Arguedas' contention in these works that indigenous culture would tenaciously stand its ground. Similarly, in an article entitled "El complejo cultural en el Perú," the author cites the promising examples evidenced by the cultural preservation and vibrancy of Mexico:

> El mayor dominio del español sobre el medio geográfico, su comunicación más fácil con Europa, precipitaron en México el proceso de mestizaje.
>
> Contemplando la realidad cultural de México y la de algunas regiones de nuestro país, podemos confiar en las posibilidades de este nuevo tipo de hombre. México permanece como un mundo poderoso e irreductible, frente al más grande y pujante país de cultura sajona. Una cultura en proceso de formación, debilitada por profundas divisiones en su centro, habría sido quizás absorbida por la influencia de otra tan extraordinariamente dinámica y tan poderosamente armada de medios de difusión como la norteamericana. El creciente resplandor de la personalidad cultural de México es la prueba más cabal del porvenir realmente ilimitado de la cultura mestiza, indoespañol or indolatina, como sea mejor denominada.[64]

By the time Arguedas penned El zorro de arriba y el zorro

de abajo, it was clear that this optimistic notion of mestization had been abandoned. For one thing, Peru did not share the same history of cultural and ethnic mixing that Mexico had experienced. In Arguedas' studies on the highland communities of Mantaro, Huamanga and Puquio, the author points to these two examples of how mestization might have culturally heartening results in his own nation.[65] In retrospect, these instances would seem to be more the rare exception than the rule. In his introduction to Arguedas' Todas las sangres, Mario Vargas Llosa states that many adverse social and economic conditions that Arguedas depicted had been largely corrected by the agrarian reforms of the 1970s.[66]

Given the political crisis that has plagued Peru since the 1970s, however, much of the progress claimed by Vargas Llosa, or the Apristas, has been set in reverse. Lima and other coastal centers of Occidental culture have in many cases become more detached from the indigenous sierra. In this regard, Arguedas' later, more pessimistic thesis that acculturation is the natural outcome for Peru's indigenous population -- and now as refugees stream in from the political and economic chaos of the hinterlands -- would seem as accurate as any prognosis of this nation's destiny.

Returning to the notion of authenticity, to Arguedas' bicultural claims that echoed by several centuries those asserted first by El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, there is another aspect in Arguedas' work that most truthfully renders

the condition of his people. As we have mentioned, Arguedas' novels have shown an ongoing fixation on the author's childhood in the highlands of Peru. In his earlier works, there is an attempt made to resuscitate and exalt this idyllic period. The same process is used by Garcilaso with regard to Peru's pre-Hispanic past. As Arguedas finds himself more permanently separated from this idealized milieu, he becomes more susceptible to the different types of cultural forces that surround him. In a sense, the constant rendering and re-rendering of strictly indigenous settings is no longer possible. The author therefore begins to concern himself more and more with the cultural dialectic of Indian/White within grander or more inclusive contexts, imparting inevitably more dire and pessimistic results. Simultaneously, the external, imported manifestations of Western culture that impinge on both the indigenous population and the author himself are viewed with increased bitterness and hostility. In <u>El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo</u>, the madman Moncada is sometimes used as the author's mouthpiece:

> Aquí, en el Perú que decimos, después de San Martín, don José, no han habido sino forasteros, extranjeros que han mandado. Nosotros no semos sino sirvientes de extranjeros... Los extranjeros son como los facineros engañadores de muchachas. Le ofrecen de todo y después que la han aprovechado, palo y escupe. Pero ahora, las

criaturas de las muchachas ya están como para retrucar el palo. ¡Que se vayan los extranjeros![67]

The sexual allusion in this excerpt is of particular interest since it points to one of Arguedas' more consistent themes. For the author there is a direct correlation between the Hispanic or Occidental and sexual abuse, subjugation and perversion, and within this context the White oppression of the Indian is regarded time and again as a metaphor for sexual hegemony. This equation often reaches a pitch of exaggeration in Arguedas' narratives since the portrayal of positive sexual relations is reserved almost exclusively for the Indians, and even here, the whole issue of sex per se is either tacitly side-stepped or avoided altogether.

In Diamonds and Flint, the correspondence between sex and oppression is one of the novella's central thematic concerns. Don Aparicio, the town's bachelor terrateniente, is depicted as a distracted pleasure seeker forever carousing and bristling his feathers. The town is filled with his concubines -- here, Don Aparicio's accumulation of lovers also underlines the commodity aspect of sexuality -- and a large portion of the narrative is given over to the conquest and kidnapping of the beautiful Indian maiden, Irma, from the village of Ocobamba. Irma is made to live in a small store/residence where she sings to herself and awaits the attentions of her inconstant suitor. Her significance to Don Aparicio is gravely

diminished by the arrival of a young blond woman, Adelaida, from the Coast. Don Aparicio's cruelty and sexual abusiveness are not regarded as inherent traits but rather the result of his frustration at being caught between two worlds, and the alienation that is tied to his social status. As Adelaida refuses Don Aparicio's advances, he reacts with ever-increasing malevolence; eventually he kills Mariano, his Indian caretaker. Adelaida can be viewed as personifying the seductions of White society, the Coast, modernity, capitalism, which for Arguedas are all synonymous or interchangeable. Although Arguedas portrays Adelaida as rather humble and -- more significantly -- chaste, the author has included her for seemingly obvious reasons. Caught between the pull of the West and that of the aboriginal past, the Mestizo will generally be drawn to the stronger, more blindingly radiant attractions of the former. Arguedas devotes a great deal of time to descriptions of Adelaida as a source of such "radiance."

In Los ríos profundos, Arguedas uses the boy's school in Abancay as a microcosm for Andean society as a whole. Here, the same kind of social hierarchy and abuse of power, which mirror those of the surrounding town, are to be found. The character of Marcelina, the school's simple-minded scullery maid, serves as the object for the students' physical and sexual profanations.

No era india; tenía los cabellos claros y su rostro

era blanco aunque estaba cubierto de inmundicia. Era baja y gorda. Algunas mañanas la encontraron saliendo de la alcoba del Padre que la trajo al Colegio. De noche, cuando iba al campo de recreo, caminaba rozando las paredes muy silenciosamente... Los alumnos grandes se golpeaban para llegar primero junto a ella, o hacían guardia cerca de los excusados, formando una corta fila.[68]

To Ernesto, the young narrator, it is almost a revelation that Marcelina is not an Indian. But in many respects Marcelina is meant to be regarded as a substitute Indian. Not only is she simple-minded and orphaned (and therefore severed from any protective ties that her caste might offer), but the dirt caking her face and hair are sufficient to transform her appearance and impede the immediate recognition of her whiteness. Further, as the object of sexual abuse, not only on the part of the school's "internos" but of the Priest himself, she functions within the school's enclosed White and Mestizo hierarchy as an Indian equivalent.

It is interesting to note that in Los ríos profundos, which is the author's great bildungsroman, Ernesto's sexual awakening should be presented as fundamentally an act of corruption. On the one hand, the school in Abancay is rendered as a somewhat corrupt institution -- one which imposes an artificial barrier between Ernesto and the rural, natural,

Indian world he had loved as a child. Here the unjust rules of the external Hispanic social order are inculcated for the first time. But, as in other works, the author tends to treat sex with the heavy hand of Christian piety.

Arguedas' later works, notably El sexto, which takes place in a prison in Lima, and El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo, teem with sexual degradations and aberrations. Here the author espouses a simplistic Marxist approach -- that prostitution and homosexuality are essentially damaged goods shipped in from the West. With regard to Rosita, a homosexual character in El sexto:

> El mundo lo ha hecho así. Si hubiera nacido en uno de nuestros pueblos de la sierra, su madre le hubiera acogotado. Eso es maldición allá.[69]

For Roland Forgues, Arguedas clearly fuses sexually idiosyncratic behavior with the excesses and abuses of the West.

> L'évocation conjointe de l'homosexualité et de Lima rattache donc directement la sexualité blanche à une véritable perversion et la fait apparaître comme un objet de jouissance dégradée et contre nature, opposée aux lois naturelles de reproduction et aux valeurs morales de l'univers indien.[70]

Although Arguedas may be correct in his assessment of how homosexuals would be treated in the indigenous communities of the Peruvian sierra, this view is also heavily colored by the tenets of another imported institution, namely the Catholic Church. Incest and prostitution were accepted facets of Inca society, and homosexuality, while looked upon with disfavor by the Incas, was considered a natural sexual expression among other pre-Hispanic cultures in Peru.[71]

As Vargas Llosa states with regard to Arguedas' prudish approach to sexual stereotypes:

> Los malvados son siempre corrompidos sexuales. Arguedas tenía una visión horrorizada del sexo. Su visión es, verdaderamente, la de un puritano, de tal manera que exagerando, algo pero muy poco, se puede decir que corrompido sexual en el mundo de Arguedas es todo aquel que hace el amor. Sus héroes son siempre castos. Rendón Willka es casto, y aquellos malvados que se vuelven buenos, inmediatamente dejan de hacer el amor.
>
> ... Sus grandes malvados son homosexuales. Lo fueron en <u>El sexto</u>, por ejemplo. Los rufianes de la prisión donde transcurre la novela, son todos pederastas. Lo es el malvado de su última novela, <u>El zorro de arriba, el zorro de abajo</u>, Brasqui, el industrial dueño de fábricas de harina de pescado.[72]

The association between sexual aberration and criminality, again tied to the excesses of Western, capitalist society, becomes most radicalized in the Marxist rhetoric of El sexto.

> Aquí, en este antro de criminales, de ladrones, de la gente más corrompida, nos han arrojado a apristas y comunistas, porque luchamos por un Perú sin criminales, sin explotadores, sin caciques, sin soplones, sin privilegiados.[73]

Diamonds and flint is in many ways one of Arguedas' simpler works, especially given the writer's mature age. Written three years prior to Los ríos profundos, it shows little of the political sophistication or complex character development of that work. Despite an elaborate preamble concerning linguistic problems that was published with the novella (and included in Barraclough's translation of Los ríos profundos), the work is astonishingly straightforward; little explanation seems necessary for the occasional use of Quechua vocabulary or syntax.

The novella centers on the interaction between the simple-minded ("Upa" or "Opa") Indian, Don Mariano, and his master Don Aparicio, the terrateniente from Lambra. As in Los ríos profundos, the theme of displacement and alienation is crucial; perhaps more so here, since this factor seems to

operate with all of the characters. The provincial capital, where Don Mariano is forced to resettle, is sketched as a physically cold and barren place (similar in many ways to Arguedas' depiction of San Juan in his first story, Agua) where the seepage of institutionalized social injustice flows more overpoweringly than in Mariano's native village. The novella's setting, while not geographically specific as in the author's other major works, does evoke the central Andean department of Abancay, where Arguedas had spent his youth. This lack of specificity allows the author to create an archetypal representation of the ongoing clash between class and culture. The nondescript quality of the town, a nameless no man's land that is neither Indigenous nor White, Colonial or Contemporary, is emblematic of the loss of identity that greets the displaced souls who settle there.

Mariano's migration from the more vibrant and unsullied orchard villages of the interior to this town is perceived as a first step in the acculturating process. He is physically able to carry with him those belongings which scantily provide him with some sense of meaning and self-worth -- his kestrel and his harp. Nevertheless, he is without an ayllu, or extended family, his songs are unrecognizable or somewhat alien to the townsfolk, and more significantly, these meager possessions will in the course of the narrative be either appropriated or destroyed.

The plight of the Indian is not cast, however, in a

wholly negative light. The novella ends with the curious and perhaps forced apotheosis of Mariano, whose spirit seems to have at least partially transmigrated to the overwrought Aparicio. Mariano's death also animates the ayllu of Alk'amare with a greater sense of solidarity, impelling it to the protection of Irma, in defiance of social order. This final movement to collective action is central also to the novels Yawarfiesta and Los ríos profundos.

In Yawarfiesta, Arguedas documents the actual building of a road in 1926 by the Indian inhabitants of Puquio. Ironically, this act, which is intuited as economically and politically empowering, will also lead to augmented migration to Lima and other coastal cities, and a more rapid dilution of Puquio's cultural identity through improved communications. The collective act of defiance in this work also involves the preservation of Puquio's non-professional bullfighting tradition (infused with many Indigenous cultural elements), which the authorities have decided to ban. In Los ríos profundos, a group of Indian women revolt when the price of salt is increased. Although these incidents may seem to be small and isolated attempts by the Native population to regain some ground from the White hegemony, Arguedas treats them with a considerable amount of importance both politically and in terms of the narrative development.

In Diamonds and Flint, the recognition of solidarity among the town's native residents is in itself of considerable

consequence. The varayok' and other Indian town aldermen cease living in the shadow of Aparicio. Aparicio also evidently understands the gravity of his actions, or the impossibility of maintaining his commanding stature among the townsfolk, and leaves with his mayordomo and the kestrel. Irma is told that she will weave for the townspeople and is thereby given a means of redeeming herself in terms that are conveniently both Christian (her chastity is reconfirmed) and Marxist (she is made a productive member of society).

Arguedas ends the work with an almost facile degree of resolution. Possibly for this reason the author includes Aparicio's final act of frustrated rage -- the mutilation of his beloved horse, Halcón. But, more importantly, the last lines of the work leave us with a very real feeling of unease. Standing before the distraught figure of Irma, the women of the ayllu are at an utter loss as to how they might communicate with her. We should be reminded that the ayllu of Alk'amare is to a large extent an artificial construct, that its inhabitants are not necessarily bound together by any common ties of kinship -- in fact, their relationship to one another is in many ways arbitrary.

In many respects, Arguedas had every reason to fear or loathe the future. The heartening example seen in Mexico's vigorous mestisized culture may inevitably prove to be nothing more than a detour or brief pause in the headlong rush toward international homogenization. Unfortunately, at any rate, this

example has not yet been successfully applied in Arguedas' own homeland. Similarly, the promise of communism, which the author embraced with some degree of ambivalence, has demonstrated an unconvincing record in the defense of cultural and individual idiosyncrasies. In Peru, the divisions between class and culture have only become more alarmingly radicalized in recent years. The hope for some more equatable solution, which for many seems to have first arisen with Mariátegui, has for the time being lost itself in the fanatical terrorism of sendero luminoso.

> If our race has concentrated on one task, and one alone -- that of building a society in which Man can live -- then the source of strength on which our remote ancestors drew is present also in ourselves. All the stakes are still on board, and we can take them up at any time we please. Whatever was done, and done badly, can be begun all over again.' The golden age which blind superstition situated behind or ahead of us is <u>in us.</u>[74]

Notes

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II

DIAMONDS AND FLINT

BY JOSE MARIA ARGUEDAS

a translation

Editorial Calicanto 1977

I

He was about to complete his third year as resident of the town. Everyone knew he was an outsider and those who wished to humiliate him would say so.

He had small eyes and a narrow forehead; his cheekbones protruded and shone. He was short and stout. His pants were held in place with a "chumpi" (waistband) decorated with images of ducks and bulls.

He was the only one to wear such a sash. From time to time, and Indian fruit vendor from his distant village would bring him a flashy one that his sisters had sent as a remembrance. From the red and blue "chumpi" background, the newly woven images of bulls, ducks or horses would spring forth as if alive.

The Indians and Mestizos paused to admire Mariano's sash. They would carefully examine it and the women seemed enchanted by the beauty of its weaving.

The neighboring landowners, the "principales[1]," and the gentlemen would laugh.

Mariano didn't react to the jibes and praises; he remained quiet and calm while the others admired or examined the beautiful waistcloth.

* *

Mariano was a harp player and tailor's assistant. He kept a kestrel he called "Clever Jovín."

The tailor's shop occupied the sole work space of an abandoned manor house where Mariano also served as caretaker.

The house belonged to a landowning matron from a nearby district. It was said that she owned the greater part of lands and Indians in the area. When she went to the provincial capital she would pass the town with her only son and three or four Indians she referred to as "lacayos[2]." Mariano would hear the tramping of horses and immediately he could tell it was them before they even reached the street corner. He would run out into the patio, dropping any work he had in his hands, to

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[1] Translator's note: principales are higher-ranking citizens. The rich or well-to-do, as well as those whites or mestizos who hold positions of power, may be referred to as principales.

[2] Translator's Note: "lacayo" is the Spanish word for lackey, however in the Andean countries of South America they generally refer to indentured servants of Indian race.

open the manor doors. Whenever the "señora" remained in town, Mariano would not show up in his workshop.

The lady's son was tall, had joined eyebrows and a feverish and troubled expression. When he came along with his mother, he would work up the whole neighborhood. He was always treating his friends to champagne until they staggered with drunkenness. Then he would laugh at them in a slanderous manner. His howling could be heard from a great distance. The town was amused by this spectacle, and for several days the embarrassment of the "caballeros" would endure. The townsfolk would exaggerate the excesses of such revelry:

"They say that Don Aparicio made several señores walk on all fours and that he even rode of some of them."

"They say that he made Don Esteban climb on the counter and give speeches."

"They say that Don Aparicio was cackling like a condemned man and that his laughter echoed across the town square."

"How ridiculous! A thousand Indians work for that man!"

Mariano would await his master in the street and accompany him at night to the manor house. He would walk behind Don Aparicio and remain silent.

On some of those nights, Don Aparicio ordered Mariano to bring his harp into the manor sitting room. He would sit back in a rocking chair and say to the tailor, "Play 'Dove of the

Fields'."

Mariano would sit on a small bench in the doorway and play the "huaynos" and "tristes[1]" that his master requested.

"Now, 'Ungrateful Willow,' 'El Chihuaco,' 'El Tuquito' ... Now sing the carnival song from my village, from Lambra!"

Mariano had a low and mournful voce, like that of a singing toad. Among the grasses of the dam, untilled lots in the village, the toads sang long and sweetly, bringing a shudder to the deep, star-filled skies, or the more dismal nights of summer.

"Don Mariano, only you bring me peace, because of your singing, because of your harp playing;" the stocky gentleman from Lambra would say as he slowly walked around the room in the trembling light of a single candle.

"How can it be, Don Mariano? My women bring me no peace; drinking cane liquor or champagne is even worse. Let's get to sleep! But first, play me one of the "huaynos" from your village out in the patio.

Briskly, Mariano would play one of the "huaynos" sung by the fruit pickers of the "interior," from the inner regions of the cordillera. There, along the deep ravines, apple, pear and peach trees grew, flowering like a garden, bearing perfect,

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[1] Translator's Note: these are two distinctive indigenous style folk songs generally characterized by a plaintive air.

brilliant fruit whose colors shone in the distance.

Briskly, Mariano played the cheerful "huaynos" from those regions. He would delight in the melodic repetitions that played off the strings' high notes as his other hand plucked a bass line from the neck of the harp.

"Don Mariano, you are the only one for me, for my soul!" His master would say as he ascended step by step to his bedroom.

The "Upa" would not speak in front of Don Aparicio, he would hardly look at him. Only the young man would speak, requesting songs.

"Why doesn't he mistreat him? Why doesn't he bring him along to play while he scuffles about with his girlfriends?" The townsfolk would ask.

The respect that Don Aparicio showed for the tailor intrigued the villagers, and the humble man, the "Upa" Mariano, was in this way allowed to follow his own customs.

"Upa" (one who doesn't hear) is what the Indians call fools or part fools. Mariano the harpist was something of an "Upa": he went to see the neighborhood festivals, and stood back, observing the great dances of the Indians and the Mestizos, with their flashy costumes and their reels. On one occasion, during a wedding party, the women brought him a plate of "patachi" and a special stew and he refused them,

despite the fact that they had to walk some distance to bring him these dishes, and that they were so beautifully dressed with long Castillian shawls training down their backs.

"Padrecito, Mariano," they said to him in Quechua,"now you must eat our sweet food, we have brought it all this way and risked our own embarrassment."

They had to cross through the middle of the street with the dishes hidden beneath their shawls. Mariano observed the women, his small grey eyes filled with terror and alienation. He couldn't speak, his lips trembled slightly.

Now it seemed like he might run off. But almost on his knees, inclining before the women, he said in a soft, imploring voice:

"No, dear women! Mamachakuna, no, my dear ladies! Please, please!"

The women were not offended. Mariano's voiced soothed them with its sad, sad sweetness.

"Why not, then? Well, why not?" They returned chattering and complaining to each other.

Mariano remained standing, leaning against a whitewashed wall that intensely reflected the heat of the sun. And he saw how the Indians danced in great circles, and he watched as the harpists played at one corner of the central clearing. The dance was meant for them, it was meant for the women, so that

they might rollick in such merriment! As the afternoon wore on, Mariano approached the patios where the people pranced together and ever so slightly his body was taken in by the rhythm of the music.

Soon, as night began to fall, the "Upa" went away. He entered the small front door and crossed the great patio of the manor, heading for his room. This was the saddling room; empty benches and stools cluttered the four corners of the rooms. Mariano lit the wick of the lamp he used for light and tuned his harp. He didn't play the songs and reels he had just heard, but instead, those from his village. He crouched over and leaned his forehead against the sweeping neck of the instrument, and the music from the orchard villages of the "interior" sprung forth in that dim room. The few people passing by in the street at that hour stopped to listen to the harp player. And they didn't rattle the front door; they didn't bother him or yell in from outside.

"It might be the archangel Gabriel, it might be some angel playing! It couldn't be the "Upa." Mariano is too simple! The Indians would say in Quechua.

"Songs from a distant village," said a more aristocratic passerby.

If some drunken Indian or Mestizo heard him, they would approach the door; they would sit on the stoop, head cradled

in their knees, listening.

Mariano sensed sometimes that people paused outside his door.

"It's only his spirit that's playing," a staggering Mestizo skirt-chaser said one night.

"It's only his spirit, nothing more! Perhaps he can cleanse my soul! It's only women I'm after -- how much have I sinned!"

And he crouched by Mariano's door in the darkness.

The music from the "interior" village was different from that of this large, cold town with its flat, open horizons, where the mountains stood off at a shrouded distance. Mariano had grown up under the protection of a small river, at the foot of a cool mountain with its stunted trees and its grasses that bloomed from January until the dry spells of June. The trees also had their small flowers. The "sanki" (a giant cactus) and the short "sok'onpuros" would burst forth with their huge flowers -- the "sanki" white, the "sok'o" red -- both shone and glistened in the morning light. To pick a "sanki" flower you had to pull the plant all the way down and knock it from its prickly, sap-bleeding stem. The "sok'o", on the other hand, clung to the sides of the cliffs -- its flowers flickered from the most inaccessible fissures. "Ay, sok'os, ay paykukiman! (Ay, sok'os, if I could only reach

you!)" the children would cry.

Mariano played as he remembered his valley, his village, where the sunlight fell warming the stones, mixing with the dust, illuminating the flowers, the feathers of the small river ducks, the scales of the kingfish that darted across bright pools of water.

"Who's going to dance to Mariano's harp? " the listeners would say."The 'Upa' plays differently."

Don Mariano never wanted to play anywhere outside the manor house, not even in the church.

"No, papacito!" He would groan, when they tried to bring him to play at some Indian or Mestizo fiesta.

"I will kick the living daylights out of anyone who drags Mariano off to play in any other house," Don Aparicio had bellowed a number of times. "I'll kick the living daylights out of him! There are more than 20 harpists in this town, no one has need of Don Mariano!"

It was strange that such a powerful and high-born young man would refer to the "Upa" as "Don." This treatment possibly had more influence by itself than any of the threats he voiced for the protection of the harpist.

No one walked with greater humility and less frequency along the main streets of town than Mariano. He would pass by as if he really didn't exist. When his young master was

drinking in the cantinas, Mariano would wait in the shadow of some street post. When Don Aparicio came out heading for either another public house or his home, the "Upa" would follow him through the middle of the streets. If the young man went to sleep at the house of one of his girlfriends, Don Aparicio would say goodnight to Mariano after one or two blocks. "Until tomorrow, Don Mariano," he would say in Quechua and Mariano would return to his master's house. And none of the Mestizos or "principales" would ever dare to set a finger on him or shout insults in the street as they would to the other Indians.

II

Why had Don Mariano left his village, and how did it happen that he came to the provincial capital? Why did he prefer to live in this large, cold town, with its many barrios, where he would remain an outsider, like a pebble that never turns to sand? How different life was in the orchard villages of the "interior"! Poverty existed there; fertile land was scarce -- peaches, apples and pears sold at three soles for half a kilo, ordinary cactus pears sold for 20 and yellow ones were 30 -- there was no other form of business. But the authorities lived far away and the common people led their lives according to ancient custom. There were no truly vindictive or cruel landowners. Life's course flowed slowly and smoothly without any sudden upsets. The few fiestas they had were planned well in advance and the people made preparations for an entire year. They would last for two or three days; tremendous days, filled with dancing, singing, many revellers and the finest of foods. Men and women would don their newest outfits on those days. The women would adorn themselves with all their finery. The children would watch the

dances or play among the fruit trees; some would cry out as they lost themselves in the darkness of the nightly festivities.

Mariano was the fifth and youngest child in the family. He learned to play the harp when he was eight years old -- his father and his grandfather had been harpists. His parents and his sisters and brothers knew early on that Mariano was something of an "Upa." He lacked dexterity and had the look of a dreamy deaf-mute. But he did understand and he did speak. They never entrusted him with any work that required agility, wit or initiative. They left him to frighten away birds from the orchard, or to bear the yoke at seeding time, or chaperon his sisters when they went shopping in the district capital. The eldest brother, who was also the first born, looked on Mariano with disapproval and embarrassment. He was tall and had an aquiline nose, thin lips, and high, lustrous cheekbones; his name was Antolín. He liked to play military marches and he was the family cart driver. It was he who took the village's legendary fruit to market in far-off towns, to those places where peaches and apples fetched a high price. The villagers would bring their fruit out to him on his heavily laden cart led by mules that were left idle for half a year.

When Antolín left on his journey, the entire community

came out to wish him farewell at the edge of town by a great boulder covered with shrubs and grasses. Mariano watched the departure of his older brother as if he were some mighty being in whose very body were centered the powers of heaven and earth. The beautiful "pasnas," the loveliest and most sought-after young women, adorned Antolín with flowers; they placed the "wallco" upon him -- a garland of fruit and blossoms which they fastened around him like a presidential sash. The great boulder was crawling with children. They all hugged Antolín, careful not to squeeze him too tight. They placed their hands on his shoulders and then he departed. Mariano remained in the shadow of the huge stone and listened to the chorus of well-wishers as they sang the "Kachapariy." He remained aloof from the crowd; since he was the "Upa," no one ever stood too close to him. The women kept their faces half-covered with their shawls, huddling close together and singing the farewell "harawi." The men and the boys, the old women, everyone stood still, silent.

Antolín went off into the distance by the fold of the mountains with the women following him -- their far-off singing reached him and caused him to shiver. The slow, long "harawi," sung by the sharpest voice, shone over the day and dominated the fading sun of late afternoon. Antolín, behind his drove of mules, kept at a steady pace. Mariano watched

him, the image of his brother beat in his heart; he sensed that the "harawi" had caused the earth to stand still, that the image of strong and happy Antolín riding forth now vibrated and stood out in the deep ravine. At nightfall, among the songs of the birds and in the absence of a sun that had grown silent with Antolín's departure, the entire ayllu returned to the village, to dance in the plaza and later in the cottage of the boy's family.

Mariano followed behind the ayllu, alone, because he was the only "Upa" in the village.

"I'll play the harp, too," he said to his father when the celebration had moved from the village square to their house.

They gave him the harp. And he cowered, like a self-conscious stranger with his forehead pressed tightly against the harp's neck, and played.

"It's because he spends his day with the singing birds that he plays so sweetly," the old men and women would say.

In Mariano's thoughts, the great stone of "Kacharpariy-pata" shimmered with its mantle of flowers. From the top of the boulder he chased off the birds with his shouts and the thundering snap of his slingshot. The birds circled showing off their feathers -- yellow, black, green and red. And he laughed to himself; he danced and jumped with a feeling of joy.

"Ay tuya, tuya, chaynataraq, manchayta, pawariy-kunta (Oh, sweet lark, how beautifully you soar)," he exclaimed.

These memories provided greater fuel for his playing. With his thin beard brushing against his chest, he plucked out the sweet and lively notes of the harp. The women watched him with admiration and melancholy. The men danced, forgetting that it was the "Upa" who played.

* *

When their father died, Antolín decided to send the "Upa" off to the provincial capital. His two sisters and their husbands accepted the cart-driver's resolution. They were frightened by Antolín; he reminded them that "Upas" were by nature cunning and lascivious.

"I can't take a wife because I fear him," he told them. "He's a man now. At night, he won't be able to resist his demons."

In those days, Mariano dedicated himself to his "Jovín." The kestrel would watch him keenly. The musician's face shone cheerfully in the bird's deep eyes. Mariano played a carnival warrior dance; then he would himself begin to dance with great leaps, never moving his gaze from the kestrel's steely beak.

"They're friends. They understand each other! They have

the same soul, for sure!" Antolín would exclaim, noticing that during those joyful moments Mariano and the kestrel kept their eyes fixed on each other. The "Upa's" heart flutters like a "killincho" (kestrel); the bird is alive inside Mariano; perhaps there's an infernal flame that burns within his soul. Out with him! I'll cast him out to the puna!"

Before daybreak, during the yearly cold and dry spell, Antolín shook his brother from his sleep, and set him off to march to the great, distant town where the "all-powerful ones" resided.

"There harp-players are in great demand," Antolín said."You will earn more than two harvests-worth in one fiesta. The council members will beg at your feet, the 'mayordomos[1]' will cry out to you on their knees, and so will all the important townsfolk, the 'government' men, the bosses. They all call you 'sweet one' and 'friend.' Your life will be great, Mariano! You'll be able to take care of your family from afar. You can go with your 'killincho.' Our departed father, foreseeing your departure, bought you that kestrel. Like you, he is great! He makes all the condors in the heavens weep. ..."

Slowly he coaxed and persuaded him; he forced him to

[1] Translator's note: the mayordomos are stewards to a landowner.

accept the decision. And he woke him when the morning star shone with a fast iciness that flooded the mountain ridges.

On leaving the patio, in the shadow of the front door, Mariano hesitated. He wanted to run back.

"Go on, go on!" Antolín yelled, pushing him.

The "killincho" alit on the neck of the harp; Mariano closed his eyes and rubbed them for a moment, and then headed out to the road.

Together they ascended to the mountains. By night, they passed the area of the orchards and the foothills that skirted the village. Morning broke as they neared the last section of valley.

They sat to rest at the pass. Antolín prayed in Quechua and gave a small piece of sugarcane in offering to the valley and the frightful pampa that stretched out before them beneath the snow-dusted peaks.

In all of Peru, this is the highest and flattest meseta, flecked with bare and reedless lakes. From the pass, Antolín could point out, as on a map, all the paths that led across the steppe.

"And that way? To where?" exclaimed the "Upa," brooding with the wind as it whistled across the diffuse borders of the pampa.

"It's only wind, like water. It seems far! It's only

wind! It's close. The 'killincho' knows." Antolín told him in a forceful voice. "I'll watch you from here. If you return, I'll smash your skull open with these 'auki' stones. Now, go!"

And the "Upa" began his descent to the grassy plain. Antolín watched him walk for several hours on the yellow surface of the pampa. The cloud shadows drew vague patterns that rolled onward and melted. He carried the harp on his back, but one end of the instrument's neck stood out above his head -- this is where the bird was perched. Both of them now scanned the horizon without a thought in their minds. Their fathomless gaze held only one expression: the will to conquer the distance that lay before them, to cross this strange world, devoured by silence, by the resounding cackle of ducks. And how the snow glistened and shone on the surface of the lakes and in the shivering heart of the traveler!

When Antolín, the cart-driver, had lost sight of his brother, he again poured several drops of aguardiente on the ground at the pass, and then he began to climb down the mountain to his village.

The harpist regained his courage while crossing the meseta, where according to legend, great, fire-breathing monsters dwelled. If he had not been overtaken by the silence, if his heart still beat in his chest, if herds of bulls and serpents had not emerged from the lakes to drive him mad with

their uproar, to stop him dead in his tracks, then he could vanquish all the demons of the earth. And with renewed energy, he quickened his pace.

"Papacito," he said to his kestrel, "where are the 'enchantments'? Where are your enemies, papacito? You are master, we are both masters here in K'allak'ata."

With the same single-mindedness he observed the great town from a low crest -- the city with its six barrios, its six small churches for the Indians, and its long central basilica of white stone and zinc roof-tiles. He was not surprised by the great expanse of land covered by houses, a great difference from his village where the humble buildings were separated by orchards and fields. He was impressed by the main square -- the plaza de armas -- a huge, bare, open space, traversed by tiled walkways; and the homes of the "principales" -- townhouses with two floors and two patios and enclosed yards surrounded by high walls.

But the "Upa", inspired by a firm if somewhat confused resolution, told himself that he was no longer in his village; down there -- in that labyrinth of houses that covered the slopes and the red hills -- that is where he would submerge himself. That is where he would live.

Emboldened by his own strong voice, he began his descent to the last crest.

But where was the "Upa" headed? Where was he going, if that town boasted more than twenty famous harpists who played in competition during the festivals held in the capital and the surrounding villages? They were the creators of melodies that were later passed on to five hundred villages, to all the nearby regions. On the night of June 23, those musicians would descend alongside the brooks that run in torrents to the deep river, the main river that bears its wealth of waters to the coast. There, beneath the great waterfalls that throw their tempest over the black stones, the harpists would "listen." Only on that night did the waters create new melodies, crashing against the rocks and flooding out toward the luminous banks. Each maestro would lie down on his chest, hidden among the towering canes, some hanging from the branches of the pepper trees, above the chasm where the torrent of water fell with its cries. On the next day and during the fiestas that lasted for the rest of the year, each harpist would play melodies never heard before, and the river would sing its music to them directly to the heart.

How, then, could the "Upa" Mariano measure up to such musicians?

* *

When he arrived in the town it was almost noon. He entered by the lofty barrio of Alk'amare. The only true thoroughfare in the barrio led directly into the Girón Bolognesi, in the town's center where the "principales" lived. Alk'amare was empty at that hour; only a few Indian women saw the musician pass by and they followed him with their eyes until he disappeared from sight down the street . They could clearly distinguish the bird perched atop his instrument. Mariano had the appearance of certain pious Indians who arrived in town from very distant regions to pray before the Christ of Challwa, which was the name of the oldest ayllu.

Mariano entered the barrio of the "principales" and stopped in the shade across from Don Aparicio's house. The young gentleman was just arriving from Lambra followed by two "lacayos." He looked at the musician and was startled by his demeanor. Mariano was admiring the carved balconies of the great house.

"Who are you?" he asked him in an imposing voice.

The musician turned to the young man and his eyes trembled.

"Here I am," he said quickly, "me, the harpist."

The kestrel ruffled his wings.

"He not wild, my lord, he a gentle lamb!"

He made the bird hop down to his hand and showed him off, beaming. His soul felt quieted. Don Aparicio was doubtful and examined him.

"Come in, I need a watchman for my house."

He waited for the Indian to pass. Then in the great hallway, he drew closer to the musician, who was still carrying the bird on his index finger.

"Might he not be a sorcerer?" the landowner thought.

He cut a strange figure: his spine was curved like a hunchback's; his legs were thin; he had the wisps of a bird...

"Play!" he ordered.

Then Mariano's small eyes lit up; Don Aparicio caught his gaze and felt a deep stirring in his soul, like daybreak before a great fiesta in the days of his childhood.

The kestrel flew to its perch on the harp's high neck and Don Mariano played a "wanka" from harvest time. The "lacayos" drew strength from the music and came closer to the spot where their master sat. With him they formed a small audience surrounding the harp player.

The "Upa" played the triumphal music that serves as a background to the farmer's singing, the songs they intone while they bring in their bales of wheat or their corn from the fields for threshing. The melody was accompanied by the

plucking of lower notes similar to those heard in the "huayno," which gave the "wanka" a festive and imploring air. With such a melody, carried by the voices of male singers, the Indian farmer reaches into the very heart of the land, into that region where all living things sprout forth. On his harp, the "Upa" blended this music with a rhythm borrowed from love songs.

Don Aparicio withdrew from the gathering and slowly headed for the stairway. He asked questions and spoke as he listened:

"For me and for me alone, shall you play, Don ..., what is your name?"

"Mariano."

"You will stay here. Take him to the saddling room. That will be your home. And the kitchen will be yours, too. We'll give you fine sheepskins and blankets, We'll provide you with corn, potatoes, ollucos[1]; you'll make clothes for the Indians, good clothes..."

Don Aparicio continued talking from the staircase, Don Mariano listened and followed him with his eyes, his hat in hand. The "lacayos" from Lambra now understood -- by his stature, by his gestures, he was an "Upa," but also an "Illa"

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[1] a kind of freeze-dried potato, eaten in the Andean highlands

(one who bears magical powers), who was touched by some ray of grace.

III

A thin, fair young woman with short hair came to town three years after Mariano's arrival. She was accompanied by her mother. They stayed at the only "hotel" in the small city. The "hotel" was located in one of the oldest residences in town. It had a large patio filled with plants and grass and the chirping of toads and thousands of crickets. Very few travelers came to the "hotel" -- a few businessmen, laborers and recently graduated teachers, soldiers in transit and those occasional travelers who chose this route to head into the Amazon basin (since the pass at this section of the central Andes was lower and less prone to ice over).

The arrival of the young blond, and her stay in town, stirred the people throughout the provincial capital and its outlying districts. She was beautiful and elegant and she came from the coast--from an important, aristocratic city. Although she belonged to a family of modest means, she dressed just like the women from Lima, in the latest fashions. Her hair was very short, in a style the girls in town would never dare flaunt; and she walked with the same enchanting gracefulness

of all the women from the coastal cities.

Don Aparicio bought one of the newest houses in town on the same day that he first caught sight of the young blond woman.

Almost all the single girls in town were anxious and depressed. Those who were married made obscene and stinging remarks about the newcomer.

Don Aparicio decorated his new home with furnishings for the bedroom, dining room, living room and kitchen; then, without hesitation, he headed straight for the hotel and offered to rent his house to the girl's mother.

The rooms at the hotel only occupied the street level of the building since the upper storey was in ruins. The rooms were dark and trimmed with stained, mildewy wallpaper. The tile floors were worn, dusty, pocked and uneven.

Don Aparicio didn't change his clothing for the visit -- he was not dressed for any special occasion. He arrived sporting boots and scarf, a fine panama hat and a crop in hand. He glared intently at the young woman; his grey eyes seemed frantic, cruel, restless; they glistened with some deep sense of anguish.

"Madam," he said to the girl's mother, "I have an old house that has served as residence for all my forebears. I bought a new one thinking that it would better suit me, since

I am young and have been educated in Lima, but I am unable to live there. I am but a humble native of Lambra, a small town in the district. I only come to the capital on occasion. It would be an honor for me if you would accept to live in my new house. I pay a watchman to look after the other one ..."

His manner was courteous and adroit. He persuaded the woman and they went off to inspect the house. He coaxed them into moving without delay.

While returning to the hotel, Don Aparicio walked beside Adelaida; he thought and murmured to himself: "Holy Father! She is so blond, so slender! Holy Father, I could not have her as a wife; in my village she would melt away like an icy 'saywa'[1]; she would laugh fitfully at the carnival 'wifaras' (revellers)! I wouldn't care if she's not a virgin, or if she's sick. What do I need her for? K'ella runa![2] So, why is it that I would want her? But I will close in on her, like dogs on their prey, unafraid to snap, circling closer on their victim, be it a vicuna or a mountain lion. It shall begin!"

The young woman could sense he was thinking and didn't speak. She had clear blue, cheerful eyes. Her mother glanced over at the young man several times, examining him.

On taking their leave, they both thanked him.

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[1] a statue bearing magical properties

[2] Useless woman!

"We are poor," the mother said to him. "I'm the widow of an Italian musician who taught at the National Institute and privately in a great many homes. We'll only be here for a few months."

She spoke with the unhalting and spontaneous frankness characteristic of the good, middle-class women from the coast.

Adelaida wanted to leave. She averted her eyes from he young man.

"I ... what I like are the flowers in the countryside," she said unexpectedly, interrupting her mother."During the trip, on the slopes bordering the town, I saw so many! Blue and red ones, blue and red, like a great fluttering blanket ..."

"You haven't seen the white ones, the great white flowers! Now you'll have a chance, if you'll permit me."

"You are a gentleman ... very well."

The young woman showed a true sense of enthusiasm. Her cheeks flushed soft pink with warm blood.

"Dear Lord," Don Aparicio continued muttering. "Dear Lord, I will bring her flowers from the mountain peaks. Her cheeks are so much like the petals of the 'achank'aray' -- red and white! Didn't I say it? The 'achank'aray' and the 'phalcha' are just like the faces of innocent children. Loveliness worthy of eternal glory! My horse, my horse --

'k'ella's[1],and I'll gallop off to the snowy peaks!" Don Aparicio's lips moved perceptibly. He bid farewell in a somewhat confused manner.

"Excuse me, young lady," he said to Adelaida. "You have made my mind wander greatly, speaking of the flowers of my land. Would you allow me to send you two Indian women from my hacienda to serve your needs? They are humble and obedient folk. I have some who will understand your bidding in Spanish."

Adelaida accepted the offer without waiting for her mother to intervene.

"One would be sufficient," said the mother.

"Never, madam! One for the kitchen and the other for your errands."

* *

The circle was now framed -- not by raving dogs, but by a higher, invisible force girded by audacity: the house, the maids, the supplies of food that he furnished "wholesale" -- all of these formed a snare, the control that he had purchased for himself and that he knew how to employ on the outsiders.

The town matrons breathed more easily; the young men

[1] Good-for-nothings!

resigned themselves; the single women grew nervous as they watched the blond girl walk about, as they felt her suffering. Don Aparicio swore to destroy, to beat senseless, anyone who spoke badly of the new arrivals. He could do it. On a given night, three hundred Indians would fall upon a hacienda or farm, they would tear down the pens at the faithful command of bleary-eyed council members, they would slaughter the hogs, horses and cows; they would chase them all off into the gullies. ... The señor from Lambra was a man of deeds and there was no other such powerful and single-minded man to challenge him. He was also a strong and great horseman; and when his anger was kindled, his eyes would burn crimson, his thick single brow would bristle, instilling great fear. He didn't throw mere punches; he would strike with the edge of his right hand as if it were a sharp, heavy piece of wood. Such a blow was called "the great snap," and it was said that a fighter from Lima had taught it to him.

But life in the town did change with the arrival of the blond girl and her mother.

"What will happen? How will it all end? When will it all end? What is she to Don Aparicio? Is he her master, or has she gotten under his skin -- does she merely want him as some plaything?" people would ask each other in the barrio of the "principales".

Married men and boys, teenagers, would all pass through the street where she lived when Don Aparicio had gone off to Lambra.. In truth, the image of Adelaida reigned over the barrio of the "principales". Only among the Indian ayllus was there little talk of her. It was said that she was a beautiful girl, with blond hair like the Virgins at church, that she had come to town and all the married women and their daughters now despised her; that many young women cried at night from grief and envy.

* *

In the afternoon of the day that the widow and Adelaida moved from the hotel, Don Aparicio entered the patio of his home disconcerted and tense. He leaned his head against one the white stone pillars that lined the corridor of the second floor. Then he called out loudly to the musician. Mariano came running from the saddling shed.

"Mariano, bring your harp," he said. "Bring your 'killincho,' too."

The kestrel fluttered on the edge of the instrument, the musician ran in at nearly top speed. He came into the corridor and sat on a bench, near the pillar.

"What should I play master?"

"A 'huayno' from the mountains, a sad one."

Mariano played the saddest one he knew, the one that begins: 'Black duck, why are you crying? I too bear eternal mourning, but not only in my feathers...'"

Don Aparicio confused true love for sadness.

"Sing, Don Mariano."

The "Upa" began to intone the first lyrics. His somber, soft voice was like the waters that grow still after plunging though a craggy abyss; the waters that sing mournfully through budding fields, as they fan out across the beloved countryside. His voice now exalted the muddled love of his master. "What is this, Don Mariano? With your harp you make me sink even further!" The señor from Lambra muttered to himself; he was no longer able to continue listening to the song.

"Mariano, bring me my horse," he ordered.

The Indian left his harp perched against the wall and headed out for the stalls. The kestrel watched the master with a seeming air of detachment so common among birds of prey; his eye gleamed like fathomless pools that opened and closed. The master of the house ignored him.

Don Aparicio didn't ask for his poncho. He had the musician put on his spurs and he mounted the horse with one jump. He departed at full canter.

The "Upa" closed up the main gate and walked off at a

languorous pace toward the edge of town. He climbed atop a huge rock shrouded in crimson lichens by the banks of the brook that skirts one end of the settlement. From there he watched his master climb the hills at great speed. The horse's flanks ran red.

IV

On the next day, in the afternoon, a group of ten Indian women led by a grey-haired Varayok'[1] with yellowish eyes, entered the town from Lambra on a road that straddles the brook. Each woman carried a stalk of white and violet achank'aray flowers in her hands, and blue and grey phalchas entwined like embroidery in her hat sash. The old Indian grasped a thick chonta-wood staff ringed with silver bands, a sign of his authority. The top and widest end of the staff was plated in silver and crowned by a cross.

The silver bands shone from the staff's black wood. Each band was a "pallay" -- a metal strip etched with birds, flowers, deer and horses with horizontal framing at its borders.

The Indians from the barrio of Challwa approached the fields and roads as this retinue passed by. Men and women greeted the Varayok' by removing their hats, but they could not understand the purpose behind this procession of flowers. By the indigo baize clothing, and the hats bordered and

[1] Head councilman

crossed in gold, they could tell that these were people from Lambra.

But all these people were arriving on an ordinary day. Who were the flowers for? Some thought they had come to fulfill some oath sworn to the miraculous Christ of Challwa. In any event, no one asked. Silently, the Varayok' traversed the broad lots and narrow streets of the barrio without casting a glance at anyone. The young women followed without a trace of happiness, without any sign of emotion that the women from the barrio could detect. "Well, what is all this?" they asked. "Why aren't they singing? Why are they dressed for a fiesta? It couldn't be for a dead person!"

In the town's central barrio, the married and single women, the young men and the "principales" understood everything.

"What a scandal!" said one of them. "The Varayok' following Don Aparicio's orders for some courting game?"

"That young man is insane!" said one woman, a friend of Don Aparicio's mother.

They all murmured among themselves, quite surprised. Some girls laughed at seeing the Indians pass with their flowers; others reacted bitterly."To get those flowers you have to climb up to the snow; he must have gone there last night. And now he has these Indians march through the streets, right in

front of our faces, as if he were bearing the rarest flowers to the Virgin! In my own town!"

The achank'aray and the phalcha bloom in the frozen soil among the rocky escarpments just below the snow-line. They grow luxuriantly in those regions where even pampa grass, small birds and vicunas don't reach. Anyone who finds them among the deserted patches of snow, swoons softly and falls to his knees. The young Indian men who are in love pick them during the nights of carnival, and a crystalline sap gushes forth from their stems.

The Varayok' and the women arrived at the doors of the house where Adelaida and her mother were staying; they were followed by a group of curious onlookers. Voices were heard.

"He's mad!" they exclaimed.

"He's off his rocker!"

The Varayok' knocked on the front door and Adelaida came out to open it. She was dumbfounded, and simply stood there in awe.

"Señorita Adelaida! My dear master, Don Aparicio, has sent us!"

The young women respectfully removed their hats. Their long, carefully braided tresses, their hats covered with flowers, the great bouquets they held in their hands, and the old Indian man with his calm and severe bearing -- it all

seemed like some wonderful and strange homage to her.

"Come in, sir! Come in, girls!" said the stranger stepping out into the street.

She let the entourage pass through. She didn't look at any of the others, she didn't pay any mind to the crowd that observed her with expressions of curiosity, mocking and reproach. She shut the door and in the small patio of the house she carefully surveyed the Varayok' and the Indian women. At that moment her mother stepped into the hallway.

The women approached Adelaida, one after the other, and presented her with their bouquets. The sun shone on her blond her. Her fine features gleamed with happiness from among the flowers. The Indian women, seeing her this way, together approached her again, kissing her hands and then retreating.

"Mother! How beautiful they are! How beautiful they all are!"

She approached the Indian women nearly running and hugged them warmly with her left arm. They felt her slight breast heave against them and stood staring into her eyes. Only the rare stones set in the deepest rivers glistened with such radiance. Adelaida also hugged the Varayok'. The old man spoke to her in Quechua.

"Now, what do you say, mama?" the girl anxiously asked her mother.

"All of this is so strange, my dear. We should leave this place soon."

"Only his name is horrible, and his eyebrows," the young woman said in a muffled tone. "And his fatness ... but ... what a soul he has, what a soul!"

V

Among those who saw the procession from Lambra pass by was a woman who cried uncontrollably. It was Irma from Ocobamba.

Don Aparicio had brought her from her distant town after returning from a long business trip. He had gone to sell twenty fine horses and a hundred mules in exchange for some cattle.

The conquest and abduction of Irma comprised a well-known tale of intrigue. He'd met her at country feast that a mule buyer had organized to regale Don Aparicio.

Near the village of Ocobamba there is a lake surrounded by tall grasses, corn fields and willows. The corn extends as far as the land is tillable; grasses and tall reeds grow in the marshy areas, and bordering the greater part of lake's shoreline are willows with long branches that dangle like locks of hair, drenching themselves in the waters or dragging along in the shadows. Ocobamba Lake was a source of great pride among the people of the district. None of the villagers had seen a more beautiful spot where young and old might rest or play. People felt rejuvenated along its shores, and even

the most serious gentlemen would run under the shade of the willows and hang from their branches. At the center of the lake was a burial mound elevated on a stone foundation. This was "puputi" -- the navel of the lake. Tall sacuara grasses waved their plumes and served as refuge for the small red-winged ducks that visited the lake.

The festive outing honoring Don Aparicio was very well attended, and by all the town principals. The arrival of an important stranger was always the best opportunity to schedule banquets and parties, a cause for great enjoyment among the local elders.

Irma was not the daughter of any important family. Her father owned a mill, some corn fields and an orchard. He had but one horse that was already old and sluggish, the victim of its master's bitterness. Irma was the eldest of five poorly dressed children who were the source of their father's despair.

Irma had a beautiful voice and an uncanny talent for singing "huaynos." She was not the most beautiful girl in the village, but no party could be planned without her. Her angular features and pearly complexion caught one's eye; her rivals claimed she looked "jaundiced." Her large, black, almond-shaped eyes seemed to be forever searching for someone at such gatherings; softly they touched upon one object and

then another, examining the patios, rooms or countryside in an unconscious, distracted manner.

Don Aparicio felt a violent longing for her. They danced some "marineras" and "huaynos" and he didn't delay in speaking to her.

"Irma!," he said to her, "I will return to my town following the horse on which you will be seated like a queen. We must cross two mountain ranges. I will set aside my dark mare for you. Not even my mother has ridden on her."

Irma's heart smoldered. He was tall, with thick, formidable eyebrows. All the girls watched his every move.

"Oh, you're playing with me! But it won't come to pass," she responded.

Don Aparicio felt the ignited breath of the young woman, and while he squeezed one of her shoulders, he examined the breasts that were pressed so tightly in her jacket.

"Oh! I know you are a virgin!" he exclaimed, clearly enunciating these words. "And yet one more stranger will drown himself for love in Ocobamba Lake."

Don Aparicio didn't hide his interest in her, on the contrary he made a show of it without offending any of the revelers or Irma's father.

She sang huaynos and everyone danced. The regaled stranger held the harp and clapped it with his strong hands,

exciting the dancers with cries and shouts, always at the side of his "partner."

Toward evening, the guests returned on horseback to their host's home.

Don Aparicio had the dark mare brought out for Irma and had it furnished for riding side-saddle. And the two of them rode off together, mounted on the finest of creatures. Don Aparicio's young steed and the dark mare strode jauntily, showing off their fine irons; quietly they rode away.

Irma's father, the miller, was unsettled during the party. He didn't know what to do. He drank beer and pisco[1] with one guest and then another, not stopping to converse with anyone, and on the way back he rode behind the others on his haggard horse. And he didn't goad the horse; he refrained from kicking his spurs into the old, encrusted wounds that flanked the animal's sides. He could not stop thinking the entire time.

Step by step, his horse carried him back to the house. He dismounted and entered the patio, pulling the horse by the reins. And his wife could not convince him to return and accompany his daughter, to protect her.

"Manan, manapunim!" ("No, in no way"), he affirmed in Quechua. He set off to the bedroom and went to sleep.

---

[1] A type of Peruvian spirits, made from distilled grapes

His wife was unable to attend the party because she lacked the proper attire for a party held by the "principales". She wrapped herself in a shawl and remained seated for a long time in the doorway of their house. Then she decided to go out. "I'll remain outside the house where the party is being held; I'll cover my face and wait in some corner. She'll have to come out soon!" the woman said to herself.

The stench of pig excrement filtered through the filthy, darkened streets; beneath the grass, toads croaked, tree branches creaked softly from the enclosed orchards.

A couple emerged from a corner of the plaza. They approached hand-in-hand. The mother waited. It was Irma with the young cattle rancher.

"How you've terrified my daughter," she said, unable to control her tears.

Don Aparicio explained that they had been looking for the girl's father, that they had waited, and now they came to look for him. He accompanied the two women respectfully and bade them farewell at the front door of their house. Irma's mother had calmed down.

"Dear mother, dear mother!" the child exclaimed once in their patio," give me your blessing, right here! I want God's blessing!"

She squeezed her mother so excitedly it frightened her.

"You are not meant for that man!" she said with a show of calm conviction. Then she spoke to her in Quechua; she told her that her father had arrived in a state of agitation; he had gone to bed but was unable to sleep; his eyes remained open and shone with the sad and penetrating brilliance of those wretched souls who cannot shut their eyelids in sleep or in death. It's an omen, a bad omen! The heavens advise us! Don't' be taken away by the current!"

But the current was sweet and powerful. "Not now, not now. Things are under control," she thought.

And she intercepted her mother in the patio; she made her stay with her until the moon came out -- a lover's half moon, which the restless Irma wished to see so that she might let her thoughts dwell on its puzzling features. She believed that she could discern the Virgin and Child on horseback. She invoked no one. She was happy, and she knew that she didn't need anyone. The branches of the walnut tree that grew in the orchard began to tremble above the illuminated ground. "Let's go, mamacita. I am at ease."

Her mother began to pray in Quechua, but the words made her sink further with fear, yet endlessly she went on drowning herself in prayer.

* *

At four in the morning she escaped from her house. She had deceived her mother with her false resignation. And in the early morning she mounted the lively mare that paced anxiously by the riverside. He had waited with his mayordomo who held the mare by the reins. Don Aparicio hugged her, squeezing her against his chest, and then raised her up onto the saddle like a feather. And they were off at a gallop.

"My dear, the best of my mistresses! She is a virgin! She is intact!" he muttered as the gallop of the swift horses aroused his feeling of pleasure and might.

Forests of broom trees perfumed the countryside. Flowers, like bright stains, could be discerned along the shores of river. The bright light of the setting moon did not blot out the stars as it touched on a chain of mountains at the edge of clear sky; beyond its tranquil light the stars shone, but not with a searing brilliance. The objects of this world never seemed so molten as they did in that light. With crystalline luminescence, the light of the stars reaches into the core of all things, into the mountains and the rivers, into the color of the flowers and the animals, into the human heart; everything becomes fused in that silent splendor. Distances vanish. Man rides swiftly past, but the stars sing in his

heart, pulsate in his hands. The heavens lose their infinite height.

Irma was bathed in that transparent light. And when the sky began to brighten and the sun emerged, she saw, far in the distance, in the depths of the valley, her small village, the orchards, the impetuous river -- the river of her village, her own village, where as a child she had belonged.

"Mother!" she cried out.

The mayordomo, who was leading, stopped his horse.

"Go on!" the master shouted at him.

"Where are you taking me? I'm just a poor girl."

She bent over and hugged the horse's sweet-smelling neck. Don Aparicio slapped the mare's haunches with his crop and gave it a start.

"Go on!" he ordered. "You may cry while the horse canters. But not loud! I don't like it."

* *

And from that time onward she became one of the master's sweethearts; perhaps his favorite, but submissive all the same, as he had them all be.

He rented a house for her in the ayllu of Alk'amare, near the district of the "principales", in the quarter where the

mestizos, small landowners and artisans lived.

Irma learned to play guitar. She fed her sorrows with song. And she didn't give up hope.

"When he marries someone else, I shall kill myself; as long as he doesn't marry, I'll remain his favorite. Who knows, who knows?" she thought.

She had no desire to make friends in town. The "other girls" attempted to ensnare her in fights and intrigues. They shouted at her in vain, they insulted her or had Mestizo women or drunken Indians insult her. She observed them calmly without saying a word; her large, wide eyes seemed tender and strange. And she knew how to ignore the jealousy and rancor of his "other girls," and the feigned insolence of the drunkards.

"Who can she be? Well, who can she be?" they would ask themselves.

And not only Aparicio's sweethearts and their hirelings, but also the ranchers' sons, the soldiers and even some of the landowners who liked her, would say, "What a faithful and loving Indian girl!"

And even if they sensed that the word "Indian" didn't really apply to her, they muttered it out of bitterness or lust.

Other sweethearts of Don Aparicio had run off with rural guards or small ranchers and farmers from neighboring

villages; and it was not difficult for the town "principales" to have some of the girls receive them on nights when the Master from Lambra had returned to his native district.

Irma didn't show herself in the streets of the town center. Late at night, or at midday, she would sing. Her memory helped her to reconstruct on her guitar the music she had heard in her village, in her distant birthplace. Apurímac is traversed by some of the deepest and most musical rivers in Peru -- ancient, powerful rivers whose currents of steel have cut through the highest region of the Andes, across the slate and diamonds until they formed great chasms; here, at cliff's edge, man trembles, drunk from the depths, as he contemplates the silver currents that rush off past the fast-rooted forests.

Irma wouldn't sing for her master. She would caress him in the high, iron-spring bed that was hidden behind a drape. Only once did Don Aparicio ask her to entertain him with the huaynos of Apurímac.

"Maybe someday I'll be able. Not now," she answered him.

He would leave her early. He never woke up in the houses of his sweethearts; he'd be taken by fits of restlessness. He dressed quickly. Some of the women would beg him to stay. And he would leave while his lovers wept. Many of them he had to beat at first; he would throw them against the wall. Once he

was in the street, he felt remorse.

"I'm bedeviled. An evil man!" he would exclaim to himself.

The girl from Ocobamba never made a show of her melancholy. She let him leave; she didn't cry. And a few days later he would return. Irma would embrace him, sometimes with a smile.

On many nights, Don Aparicio knocked on her door and called out her. "I've come only for you, 'Ocobambina'," he would say to her.

It was true. His sweaty horse would stand waiting by her door, with foam dripping from its mouth.

* *

The arrival of the young woman from the Coast was also unsettling to Irma. One afternoon, Don Aparicio went to pay her a visit.

"Now you are going to sing, Irma," he said to her as he sat down on one of the room's adobe benches that stood on the other side of her bedroom drape.

She strummed her guitar and sang a huayno that bore the refrain: "Oh, peacock, eagle of the rivers!"

"Sing that one again!" he asked her. The young man's

eyebrows seemed to shudder; they veiled his eyes completely.

"Once more, 'Ocobambina," once more!"

He listened with closed eyes for a long time; then, without looking at her, he got up, opened the door and left.

Three days later the Varayok' from Lambra arrived bearing flowers for Adelaida.

Early that evening, Irma paid a visit to Don Mariano. She had been hatching a bold plan. The musician opened the small courtyard door to see who was knocking. Irma entered resolutely, and she bolted the door closed herself.

"We're going to talk about your master. Now, which way to your room?"

Don Mariano led her to the saddling room. The kestrel stood contentedly on a perch nailed to the wall. Irma had interrupted them. It was the "Upa's" custom to dance foolishly for Jovín; the kestrel would bob and cower, as some birds do, in imitation of his master's movements. The floor was covered in new straw -- the hardy, lustrous, golden straw of the highlands -- that caught the light of the setting sun.

"My little girl, "niñita"! Don Aparicio! My master! What could be the matter?"

She had startled him, and the musician, intoning his master's name, anxiously held his hands out to the girl.

"Nothing! Sit down!"

And she spoke to him in the sweet and touching Quechua of her native Apurímac. Mariano listened to her; the dialect he heard was similar to the one spoken in the small orchard villages of the interior, of his own village. There the tributaries of the Amazon are born, extending long veins of water that roar through the mountain valleys. Irma's Quechua carried the sound of those rivers, of the birds that cavort overhead, shrieking and calling out to the humans below.

Slowly, Irma made him forget the passage of time and the fact that he was an "Upa." Her moistened eyes; his youthful, pained face; and the story that he heard -- the sense of hope -- were all troubling to him. he knelt before her and cradled his head, fearlessly, in the girl's hands. Her warm fingers caressed him with their eager vitality. The sweetest star, the Yutu[1] of deepest night, shone in her eyes!

"Dear girl! Mamacita!" he exclaimed rising to his feet,"Here we are! Here we are in our suffering! What you wish is my command! With my harp, and with my soul, too!"

Irma cried in the company of someone else for the first time since she arrived in that town.

The "Upa's" face seemed to shine like the pristine lake at the shores of which one might cry without stopping. The small ducks may come to stir and swim; the wind may howl; the

[1] Quechua for Sirius.

reflection of mountain and reed quiver.

"I will play, 'mamita,' in your house, for the master! You can carry my harp!" Mariano said.

And he returned with her to Alk'amare, to her doorstep. They were seen by no one, because in such frigid towns people rarely go out at night. The musician hurried home. In the saddling room he danced for his Jovín and then fall back onto the glistening straw.

"My mistress! She will be my mistress! Ajajay, killincho!" And he stared back at the quiet kestrel.

VI

For ten days Don Aparicio remained in Lambra. He arrived back in the provincial capital in the morning, followed by two mayordomos on fine horses. Don Aparicio rode on his black steed, "Halcón"[1], decked out in holiday finery. He didn't take the road that led into town from Lambra, through the ayllu of Challwa, but detoured through the hills and came down directly into Aĭk'amare, thereby passing along the town's main street. Four hundred silver rings shone from the saddling trim; the stirrups were plated in sliver; the large spurs had also been forged of pure silver and they were held in place with silver studs. The steed strutted ostentatiously through the street, guided by its master; the black animal's hoofs clapped sonorously against the paving stones; its wide, powerful neck was arched proudly backward, and its small ears twitched and pulsed with the pounding throb of the creature's blood.

The people surged and pushed into the street and came out onto their balconies to watch them pass. The sound of the horse's gait and the stirrups were familiar to the townspeople.

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[1] Translator's Note: Halcón is Spanish for falcon

Don Aparicio wore his finest vicuña poncho, which due to its weight did not stir with the wind or with the horse's stride. An edge of the poncho was thrown back over his shoulder to reveal a blue-fringed blanket and silver-edged saddle. The mayordomos followed their master close behind.

"This Aparicio, educated in Lima, has learned nothing."

"He likes people to see him. He dupes the women with his pretentious airs!"

"Local women! Women educated in Lima are unimpressed by this outmoded pomp and circumstance!"

He managed to hold the attention of the crowd that had formed. Some of the young women viewed his customs disparagingly. "He's a dullard, just like his village ancestors," they said to each other. Nevertheless, almost all of them stayed to watch the steed pass by with its master, who greeted them with a nod of the head. His nervous expression shone through. To reach the street where his house was located he had to make a left turn at the corner. He jabbed his spurs into the horse and made the animal rise up on its hind legs. The steed made several short skips and a spirited look shot across Aparicio's face. His mayordomos also clamored and kicked at their horses whose shoes drew up sparks along the pavement.

That morning the subject of conjecture and gossip was not

only Aparicio, but the young woman from the Coast.

"That barbarian is capable of losing her this very day! His mother probably refused to go through with it and he'll probably have to present himself alone."

"Didn't he dismount in front of the girl's house?"

"Why has he brought two mayordomos on such fine horses, decked out for a feast?"

"He won't ask her, he might be refused. Even if he is a 'principal,' they don't know him well enough. maybe they're no longer lovers."

"And what do we know about <u>them?</u> Maybe the mother or daughter are tubercular. Poor consumptives who have to eat potatoes and drink milk. And the climate! They should accept him on their knees!"

Don Aparicio only wished to remain a few days. He hade made his entrance with great pomp and circumstance, and he'd not do otherwise as long as Adelaida was in town. He would always ride in along the main street with an ever-increasing entourage -- even if they would have to be dispatched to Lambra that very day.

And this time he didn't head for his own house, but paraded through the street until he reached Adelaida's doorstep.

When the horses stopped brusquely, forming as they did a

clamorous troop, the young Adelaida came out to have a look on the street. Don Aparicio stood in front of her door, the wide chest of his steed festooned with silvery reins. He greeted her by removing his hat; the mayordomos mimicked their master's gesture. the three horses stepped back a bit.

"Here we are, your servants, señorita!"

The young woman's cheeks were inflamed and he saw this; he thought he knew the reason for the girl's blushing complexion. He kicked his spurs and made his horse jump back. Then, barely touching the reins, he made a few sharp turns around the narrow street. "Behave nicely, see who commands you!" he said to the animal, seeing that Adelaida had her eye on them.

"Will you mount him?" he asked, after climbing down in front of her house. He approached the girl and extended his hand. Her short blond hair, her delicate hands, awoke in Aparicio the memory of an old dream. "What could it be, what could it be?" he asked himself. He had fallen asleep, as a child, in the hayloft of some Indians who lived along the interminable, frozen slopes of the puna. His father dragged him out at dawn. While the rare, lone birds of the steppe intoned their melancholy song, the sun appeared with its rays spreading forth across the ground. And every stalk of hay in those treeless fields became bathed in the brilliant light.

"You will ride him, Adelaida. Despite his regal airs, this steed is the most obedient of beasts," he told her.

He took her by the arm and brought alongside the horse.

"If you and I were to leave him here and forget about him, I think he'd first die of hunger before budging from this spot; I tamed and saddled him myself. 'Look here, Halcón! You will carry her like a small flower!"

He took the rein and moved the horse's head slightly. The animal examined her with its large, aqueous eyes, which showed neither pride nor prowess, only a serene sense of depth; its ears twitched spiritedly.

"Now you can pull his ears, Adelaida! Go ahead! That way you'll be convinced he recognizes you. Maybe you don't know, but it's the best way to prove an animal's domesticity."

The young woman caressed one of the steed's ears. Nothing -- not even a pelt of fur -- can feel so soft to human touch. The great beast seemed to be pleased, and sighed. Something seemed to be flowing beneath its shiny chest. The horse twitched to expose the darker side of its mane; it shone with a brilliance that seemed to issue forth from the animal's own dark essence.

"Yes, I will do it. Tomorrow. We'll tell my mother!"

And she called to her mother. Two Indian women from Lambra followed Adelaida's mother out and practically threw

themselves before the young man. He sent them off without uttering a word. "Very beautiful, very beautiful; both her heart and face are beautiful!" they said to each other in Quechua as they walked away.

The mother accepted his invitation to Adelaida. They would ride to a nearby lake that was well known for its shores of yellow sand.

The road was flat and crossed fields of alfalfa and wheat. They all mounted their horses. The mayordomos brought up the rear in single file.

"Go ahead, Félix," the master ordered.

The young man who was following at closest range approached.

"Her arms are so slender," Don Aparicio said to his first mayordomo. "She's a creature from some other world. I would like to see her before the alter in the cathedral!"

"You'll take her there, master!"

"She must still enjoy playing and frolicking; our plaza is a good place for that with its shade trees."

"You can have the square swept everyday, señor."

"But ... she's not of our class. She's not, she's not!"

"It's up to you!"

Félix, who had a beard, was the best at rounding up the cattle.

"What do you say, Félix? Would my father be laughing at me?"

"Your departed father would be watching closely. You should get to know the girl. The Indian girls used to attract your attention."

Later on, Adelaida spoke to her mother in the patio: "I didn't tell you about the flowers? I didn't remember. Or, I didn't have the time. On each occasion he seems different to me ... he seems of greater stature."

Near the front gate of Don Aparicio's house, Félix asked his master, "And the girl from Ocobamba, sir?"

"What?" He turned to the mayordomo with a fierce look in his eyes. His brows shuddered.

"Yes, Don Aparicio. What are you going to do?"

"Things will go on! Forever! It has to go on!"

Félix fixed his gaze on the young man without budging. He had been a companion to the old, deceased master and to Don Aparicio on all their trips and undertakings. On the morning of Irma's abduction he had seen the young virgin from Ocobamba weeping on horseback as she trotted among the molle trees. And he was moved by her proud bearing, her angular and lively face, her eyes. "And if they dragged me from my loved ones, with deceptions, like that, all of a sudden ... to take me to a strange town. And after all that to treat me like a dog! So

innocent! In short, if my soul were tarnished and battered from birth..."

Don Aparicio could read his mayordomo's thoughts. Félix was like an extension of his own body and soul.

"Go to her and send my greetings. Tell her to expect me tonight," he ordered.

In this way he quieted him down and put him in his place. He smiled. The musician unbolted the front gate of Don Aparicio's house. The steed entered cautiously and paused in front of the patio's main post. Félix set of down the street at a gallop.

Aparicio did not stop to speak with the musician; he climbed the stairs slowly.

Mariano sat waiting on the bench. He was taken over by a joyous feeling of conviction.

* *

When Félix returned home, his master had already gone out, Mariano was longer in the patio. Félix found the musician in the stable yard, gazing at the horses.

"You're not going to cook," he said. "I'm inviting you to

the 'picantería'[1] !"

The musician had never conversed with the Mestizo mayordomos; only when Don Aparicio's mother came with her servants did he speak to them in Quechua. The Indian "lacayos" would seek him out in his shed where they would praise his Jovín and talk about the habits of wild kestrels. "They cause the condors to weep. They come to our mistress's great patio and carry off chickens; they even take grown turkeys. They descend like arrows. They are hidden by the wind itself; only the flapping of their wings can be heard." And some of the "lacayos" would sleep in Mariano's room. In the morning he would play his harp, very softly, almost up to the Indians' ears. Don Aparicio's mother mistrusted the musician.

"My son loves him, and for that reason alone do I refrain from having him carted back to his village. He seems like a sorcerer to me. He hears things we can't."

One time she called him up to the hallway on the house's second storey, made him get down on his knees, and asked him, almost screaming in Quechua:

"What is it that you hear? What are you listening to all day long, you creature!"

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[1] Translator's note: a picantería is a modest restaurant found in Andean towns; the name for such establishments derives from the Spanish word "picante" (spicy), since these restaurants often serve spicy food.

The musician could not answer her.

"He's bent to the ground as if he were made of lead," she exclaimed, and marched off to her bedroom leaving him on his knees.

Mariano got up when his knees began to prickle and carefully descended the staircase, pausing now and then in the fear that they might call him if they heard him going away.

Now, how was he to walk off and dine with the first mayordomo?

At noon, Félix took him out through the side door. He didn't speak to him in the street.

They sat down at a small table in the restaurant corridor. During supper, Félix looked at the musician affectionately. Mariano could see that the mayordomo was going to speak to him, to say something; but the words didn't come. They drank "chicha"[1]. The mayordomo imbibed half a jug. He smiled and stopped drinking from his glass, taking instead the whole jug to his mouth and gulping down long draughts. He wiped off his beard and shouted:

"Another one, mamita! Right away!"

He invited the musician to drink, handing him the filled jug.

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[1] Chicha is a type of Andean beverage that has existed since pre-Columbian times. It is often made from maize; there are fermented, alcoholic varieties.

"Just like me -- bottoms up!" he said.

Mariano could not drink so much. "It's not my custom, padrecito."

Félix drew close to the musician. He walked around the table and sat next to Mariano on the same bench.

"Don Mariano! Don Mariano! My mistress, Irma. Also your mistress!" he said.

Then he grabbed him up by the arm. Félix left a few coins on the table and they left. He walked slowly for some distance down the street, his arm draped around the musician's shoulder. Mariano was short and nearly round; the mayordomo was robust and well-built, and therefore he seemed as if he were leading Mariano, as if he were guiding and holding him up. The passers-by looked at them; some stopped in confusion. "The 'Upa' drunk? And with the first mayordomo of Lambra?"

But then they drew apart and continued walking; Don Félix on the sidewalk and the musician in the street.

The "Upa" entered his master's house with Félix following at some distance.

Mariano sat down in the sun by the door of his shed. Flies played in the damp corners of the yard; some chased each other, buzzing. A small, fat spider was jiggling its front legs as it lurked nearly hidden behind a dust-covered stone. Mariano listened to the tiny creatures and watched them

through his tears.

"What am I crying about, Mamita! What am I crying about!" he said to himself in Quechua.

And it was because the world caused him to cry, the whole world, this shimmering place, lover to mankind, to our very being.

* *

Don Aparicio did not show up. When the last rays of sunlight faded in the sky and night fell darkly, the first mayordomo entered Mariano's shed, picked up the harp and took it away.

"You will go now," he said to the musician from the patio. "Don Aparicio is with the ladies from the Coast. He'll certainly leave directly from there."

The harpist went out into the yard, watching how Félix carried the instrument, across his chest, hidden from behind by his body. Soon he disappeared into the darkness.

The stars were shining so far away! The wind blew. Clusters of clouds drifted from one end of the sky to the other and began to veil and temper the starlight. Beneath the stellar firmament, a damp croaking from the village toads could be heard. Their song grew maddening, perhaps because the

clouds ran and gathered so, at times falling to the very ground; then they began to chirp more sweetly and melodiously; the lowest, deepest voice buried in the nocturnal landscape.

Mariano listened to the song of the toads and became lost in his thoughts. He remained seated for a long time in the small doorway to his shed. Then he shook his head, closed the door and headed off in the direction of Alk'amare.

When he stopped by the storefront, Irma came out. Don felix was there, leaning against the wall, pulling at his beard. he looked troubled.

"I'm leaving," he said. "I'll go get the master. When he comes here, I'll return home."

A kerosene lamp with a very clean glass lit up the room. Irma's house was not a proper house, but a "shop." Such shops had no grounds or enclosed courtyards. One single door led directly into the "store" area and horses could not enter. Anyone on horseback visiting such places leaves the horse out front, standing in the street.

A room, a small patio and a kitchen at the end of the narrow inner hallway made up the entire living area. Irma had pots of pansies and geraniums lining the hallway; a honeysuckle vine fought against the cold and was beginning to creep sinuously up some light sisal cords the girl had tied to the roof. A small broom tree near the kitchen door was already

aglow with tiny flowers. It reminded her of the forests that skirted the Apurímac riverbanks.

Cotton drapery separated the bedroom from the sitting room. There adobe benches had been made more comfortable by Irma's addition of pillows and cowhides. An elevated niche held the lamp. All the walls were whitewashed.

Irma brought the musician by the arm into her bedroom; there the harp lay.

"He will certainly come soon! It's already late."

Mariano set about tuning the harp. He was calm. Irma heard the notes and came into the bedroom.

"Padrecito mío, play gently. Play something," she said to him.

Mariano played the huayno his master had so often requested. "Why do you dress in mourning, river worm, why do you crawl so slowly ..."

They heard footsteps.

"Now, that's better!" she said.

It was Don Aparicio, dressed in party attire sporting a black cape without poncho; a tie and a thin scarf, instead of his heavy, embroidered vicuña muffler. He wore no boots with his festive apparel; his patent leather shoes glistened.

"Ocobambina, I've come just to hear you sing," he said.

And now, beneath the lamplight, he began to lose faith.

"How beautiful you are, my God in heaven! Why have you put that geranium in your hair? What's with you, Ocobambina? Do you still keep hoping? Your love! How long will you have those strong, maiden's arms? And your eyes too, Ocobambina. You haven't lost yourself. Why did you put that flower in your hair? You remind me of the canyon doves. Your eyes are like two wild doves singing from your dark face; singing during a heavy downpour. The world can sometimes tear you apart, right through your heart ... let us see, sing!"

They sat down together. The girl was afraid to begin.

"River eagle, I await you,

River foam, mountain eagle ..."

With the next stanza, the melody had to be repeated and she raised her voice. Don Mariano heard the verse, closed his eyes and rested his head against the bridge of his harp; daylight flooded into his memory -- he looked out at the orchard and his beloved river ... "Niñacha, niñachallay,"[1] he repeated to himself. And he began to play, continuing the song of his childhood. It took Don Aparicio some time to notice that other form of music that they seemed to radiate while singing; perhaps through their ears, perhaps through their eyes...

He got up and walked around. He felt the voice of the

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[1] Little girl, sweet little girl

harp. He entered the bedroom and found the musician still playing, with his head bent over, listening intently. He went out. Irma watched him, smiling, in love, more the mistress of her own house than ever. Don Aparicio started suddenly. He didn't have his crop.

"Out with you, Indian!" he shouted.

Irma felt like jumping up but her master's eyes rained fire as if every part of him were burning.

Mariano went out lugging his harp. Don Aparicio grabbed it from him, causing the strings and bridge to snap. Stamping heavily, he destroyed the instrument, flattening it to the ground. He opened the door and pushed Mariano out.

"K'anra!" He yelled to him in Quechua.

He turned to the young woman and said, "Goodbye, Ocobambina! Goodbye, goodbye!" And then he left.

Mariano ran through the streets like a wild bear in flight. The front door was unbolted . He entered into the patio and stood, not knowing where to turn. Don Félix would be sleeping or waiting in one of the rooms by the second patio. He didn't want to go into the saddling room and see his kestrel. He went out into the courtyard and then returned. He sat down on the tiled floor of the hallway, at the foot of the staircase. Through his confusion, the croaking of the toads rose to his ears. He got up again and began to climb the

stairs on his knees. At the top of the stairs he stood up again and walked with tremendous care toward Don Aparicio's bedroom door; there he sat crouching against the wall.

The master soon arrived. He unbolted the door noisily. Félix ran out from the second patio.

"I have no need for anything! Back to bed!" Don Aparicio ordered.

Quickly he passed through the tiled hallway on the first floor. He proceeded upstairs; for a moment he stopped to glance up at the cloud-filled sky from the timbered bannister and then walked resolutely to his bedroom. When he was about to put the key into the door, the musician threw his arms around his master's knees, whimpering.

"Dear father! Papacha!"

Don Aparicio pushed him away with shove to his head. But the musician continued to call out to him, grasping tightly to the young man's knees. With a violent yank, he threw the "Upa" down; then, picking him up under the neck and legs, he ran to the balcony railing and threw him off, into the air.

Mariano yelled out as he fell; the master from Lambra didn't hear so much as a groan, only the sound of his body smacking against the patio cobbles. Don Aparicio slammed his shoulder against the bedroom door but was unable to open it. Again he pushed against the door, only to fall to the ground.

He lit the two candles in the copper candelabra and sat on the bedroom rug with his back to the wall. The light danced and flickered over him in waves.

* *

At dawn, Félix came in. "You didn't shut the door, master, you didn't sleep in your bed. The candles have gone out. And Mariano is lying dead in the patio. You've killed him, master!"

"Félix, call the Varayok' from Alk'amare! Bring him to my room. Mariano has fallen over the bannister. I think he was trying to kill me. Félix, call the Varayok'! Have them ring the church bells in Alk'amare! I shall wait here on the floor, by myself. Bring the Varayok'!"

He stood up. Beneath the deep shadow of furrowed brows, the master's eyes flared from his waxen face. Félix went out into the street.

The church bells of Alk'amare rang out. They announced death in the morning light, with a tolling that fell like drops of blood. The Indians of the ayllu crossed themselves. The limpid and sad strain of the bells was heard far away. The fragile, dewy, red lichens that grew on the large stones of the ayllu withered with the cold morning wind and drank in the

weary, lamenting knell. From the whitewashed turrets, the birds were already singing.

The Varayok' alcalde[1] of Alk'amare ascended the staircase in the great house. He carried his carved staff, which he rested upon as he walked. He removed his cloak and entered Don Aparicio's bedroom. A canopy of dazzling white curtains hung above the bronze bedposts. Don Aparicio was sitting on a red upholstered, wooden chair. "Alcalde," Don Aparicio spoke to him in Quechua. "Don Mariano, my watchman, has died. I commend him to your ayllu for burial. A great burial. The tutay[1] shall be observed here. You will hold the Pich'kay[2] in your house. I'm providing you with 2,000 soles for expenses. Arrange everything for the wake in the inner courtyard. I shall not go out. Don Mariano arrived in our town through your ayllu, let him rest there. The mausoleum is there. Let the entire ayllu be present, let them all join together! He is your son! He will play his harp from heaven for the feast of Alk'amare! He will play the harp forever, throughout eternity; in my heart he will also play!"

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[1] Translator's note: alcalde is Spanish for mayor. The varayok' (council member) here also serves as chief representative for the community (ayllu). This position is not necessarily recognized by the ruling elite.

[1] wake

[2] religious ceremony held on the fifth day following a death.

The Varayok' listened to him without moving. Don Aparicio handed him a belt filled with yellow bills.

"Papay," the alcalde answered, "we shall bid farewell to this servant of yours like a great townsman whose tasks have been completed. He shall play beautifully for our Lord; his suffering is at an end. It is said that he was trampled by the black steed."

"He died in the night. Let the people come!"

The Varayok' went away praying, "Ave María, purísima!"

Félix remained in the doorway; the shadow cast by his body fell along the carpet and touched upon Don Aparicio, who felt its presence. He waited a moment before lifting his firm gaze; a gaze which could not even be broken by the surunpi[1].

"The steed? Why? Lacayo!" he asked.

"Don Mariano has blood on his head, across his neck, on his face. Once, during the season of "Tantar," the horse named "Huaycho" kicked one of the muleteers and gave him such wounds. He killed the man with one blow."

"The black steed is greater than you, Félix, lacayo! You envy him. In Alk'amare they'll say that Halcón committed the murder! I'll never be able to enter town on that horse. Nor will you. In two or three days every Indian in Lambra will dig a grave in their soul for Halcón. They will believe that the

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[1] sunlight reflecting off fields of snow

horse's smell is the smell of death; that his eyes are death's eyes; that death hangs from his tail and from his mane. His neigh that once made the very air of Lambra shake... What will they say? They are ringing the church bells, lacayo ... but Halcón shall go on breathing. He is alive! As am I! I too am alive! Tell the mayordomo to come. Let him wait by the door. You shall no longer come here. Bid farewell to the ayllus of this town and get yourself to Lambra. Keep my mother there. Yes, lacayo, right away!"

Félix went away with a sure stride.

* * *

Through the open courtyard gate, the ayllu of Alk'amare entered the house, two by two. The three Varayok's led the crowd of people. They were dressed in black. The Varayok' alcalde wore an old, blackened silver cross on his chest. Its Christ figure had a broad face with a massive nose. The alcalde walked between the alderman and rural prefect. Most of the men and women wore black, and those who didn't were dressed in dark blue.

They filled the two patios of the house. They were packed into the kitchen and all the rooms surrounding the second

patio. In the inner patio hallway, they laid out black baize on one of the tables. There they set Mariano's body. At a sign from the choir leader, the ayllu recited the "Yayayku" (Pater Noster). Like a cloud of horseflies, the solemn words rose from the lips of the mourners. The undulating murmur reached the young master's room. The taksa[1] mayordomo, who was standing at the threshold of the bedroom, removed his hat; his flattened hair nearly covered his face, he cupped his hand around his ear, listened and began to pray aloud in the same murmuring tone of the crowd below. Don Aparicio arose and walked toward the doorway. The mayordomo's somber voice disturbed him, much more than the voices of the ayllu. His were clear, audible words that capped the base, muffled hum of the horseflies. He returned to his chair, and he felt as if he had been bent over because his heart weighed more heavily than the rest of his body.

The prayer ended and there was a moment of silence. Don Aparicio knew it! Now the women would sing the "aya-harawi[1]." He closed his eyes. A group women covered over part of their faces with their shawls and began the recitation. They did not utter words, only syllables, and with the sharpest and most

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[1] younger

1 Translator's note: the Aya-harawi and Aya-tiki are mournful folk songs commemorating the dead.

penetrating voice in creation. The older men, who were standing beside the corpse, slowly chewed specially chosen coca leaves; the other men listened with faces impassive as a wall. The tone of the singers rose, their notes lengthened, their recitation seemed to be drawn forth by the earth itself. The women of the ayllu began to weep and set off a contagion of wailing that grew ever more despairing. They sat down on the ground. The taksa mayordomo paced to and fro. Don Aparicio closed his ears to the lamentations of the women and shut his heart from the "harawi." He felt oppressed by their singing but his blood rushed in torrents; he felt his soul being lifted, carried to the realm of death. The towering eucalyptus trees that grew in Lambra appeared before him and seemed to be marching toward him, swathed in a tender and mournful halo.

The singing stopped and the young man felt it might be better to go on living in the stifling abyss to which it had dragged him.

The chorus resumed, hour upon hour, like a pendulum that swung at the center of the heavens. What sun, yet no sun! Every beam of light was tremulous and golden like the rays that bathe the earth after an eclipse. Men from the highlands walk with a sense of dread beneath such light.

* * *

They carried the musician's body on a heavy, eucalyptus-wood bier. Don Aparicio watched the procession scale the slope, at the summit of which stood the mausoleum. The people from the ayllu covered the hillside. The master from Lambra remained on his balcony until the crowd began to pass into the burial ground. Suddenly the decision came to him and called to the mayordomo:

"Saddle up the black steed!"

He paced the upstairs hallway in his patent-leather shoes, his black suit, bright blue tie and hat.

The mayordomo brought out the black horse. When the animal was held by the reins he didn't bolt but strode step by step with his head thrown back in the air.

Calmly, Don Aparicio descended the staircase. He took the steed by its reins and was about to mount, but then he stopped. "The spurs!" he ordered.

He affixed the spurs himself, and then he mounted. The mayordomo had already opened the courtyard gate.

The streets were empty; everyone had been following the funeral procession. Halcón headed off at a gallop. From some of the windows, mothers and daughters of the wealthier class watched as the young man went by. "On the steed?" they asked each other. "And he's dressed in mourning." But for the moment they were held back from making malicious comments.

A few very drunk men from the ayllu were walking cautiously on the bare slope that led to the cemetery. "Don Mariano, papacito, angel!" Don Aparicio heard them say as he dismounted. The horizontal rays of the setting sun shone from a ridge of mountains onto the great blue door of the mausoleum. Over the crypt's keystone, a high-relief, whitewashed skull stared out toward the town.

Over the vast cemetery field Indians from all the town's ayllus stood talking. When they saw Don Aparicio they parted and opened a path for him to pass. High grasses, still green, sprouted from the cemetery soil. When he arrived at the grave site the corpse had already been lowered. Mariano was dressed in a brown suit; his bare, yellow feet were visible. His head was covered by a hood; they had placed cotton balls over his face. A small, llama figurine fashioned from wood hung from his clasped hands. The llama would accompany him on his silent journey to the great tower, which, according to the Indians of Alk'amare, the dead built on the distant summit of K'oropua without ever completing it.

Closing his eyes, Don Aparicio spoke to the corpse: " My soul shall also follow you like a white dog, padrecito Mariano, through all the silent regions where you must pass. And here, in my body, my blood runs like the ice of winter months, like the snow of high peaks where condemned souls

weep, lapped by flames, forever without solace. Farewell, farewell, farewell!"

The "alcalde," standing with his face toward the setting sun, gave the last rites. He didn't say a word to the master from Lambra. He had been drinking all night and his skin seemed to glow; his eyes took in everyone and everything. There was about him an aura of stupefaction which seemed appropriate. He nodded his head; a singer intoned the "Yayayku" and the crowd joined in recitation. Don Aparicio remained in front of the alcalde contemplating the dead body and observing the form of the Varayok', on whose chest the silver cross shone with an opaque brilliance.

The prayer ended and the Varayok' looked at the young man as if from a shrouded and distant world. "You first," he ordered in Quechua. One of the Indians handed Don Aparicio a shovel.

With the shovel in his hands, he moved to one side and could see his first mayordomo, Don Félix. A few steps away, dressed in black and with her face nearly obscured by a mantilla, stood Irma, her eyes brimming with glistening tears. Don Aparicio shook his head. What immense sun was drowning within her? He was at the mausoleum. He stooped over, scooped up a small mound of earth into his shovel and threw it over the body, not on Mariano's face, but on his uncovered feet.

"That's it!" He heard the authoritative voice of the Varayok', who with his appearance and his impassive eyes was now the master, the dueño.

He obeyed. The crowd passed the shovel on to the mayor; he bent over and dug deeply into the loose soil and threw it over the grave; then he took hold of the shovel and passed it to the rural prefect.

From the mausoleum entrance a group of women began to sing the "aya-tiki." Don Aparicio nodded his head to the alcalde and went out.

He mounted the steed and descended the slope nearly at gallop. On entering the streets of the town, he pulled back the beast's reins and kept it to a clipped pace, as when he would arrive from Lambra. He ambled past his own front gate and dismounted in front of Adelaida's house. He knocked on the courtyard gate several times. One of the Indian women came out.

"Call the young lady. Let her come out alone."

She came to the open doorway dressed in yellow. The waning sun touched lightly on her cropped hair; a golden light glowed from behind her.

"What's the matter, Don Aparicio? You seem to be at death's door," the young woman said taking him by both hands.

"A greater decision I've never had," he answered her. I

must set out on a journey, to Ocobamba. Over three mountain ranges into the interior. I've come to say goodbye, only to you. And only here."

He knelt before her and kissed the border of her dress; he climbed on his horse and set off at a gallop.

"He's a barbarian! A highland barbarian!" she yelled.

"Ay, niñita, lovely child, ay, little dove!" The woman from Lambra began to cry. She had seen Don Aparicio's departure and his frozen demeanor. It was perhaps death itself that had brought the young master to their door. Who else, who else would die? The mighty figure that had just ridden away, or this beautiful, sweet, flaxen-haired creature?

"Mamacita! Ayalay! Little child!" and she threw herself howling before Adelaida. The girl's mother came running and the two of them carried her away.

* *

Don Aparicio had decided to wait the night, to go to Irma's, beat her and then carry her off to Lambra.

"I will marry her early in the morning. And I will make her suffer for the rest of her life. She won't go out even to see the pisonay trees in the plaza, or the red carpet that is formed by its flowers. Félix might try to console her. He'll

want to kneel down at her feet and maybe he'll hope to bury his face in her skirts. He'll think that this will come to pass! But the heart that I've imprisoned has no other key; the heart that I've captured beats as in a tomb. In the same way I have blotted out those blue eyes from this moment onward. The sun that flickered in her hair, that caused her to glow like a child of the wheat fields. We've erased her, Halcón. This shall be our last thought of her. Other wheat fields will now be waving on the slopes above Lambra! They'll be waving like a flag where the sun takes its leave. They'll still be blazing gold! And the eucalyptus groves will be shrouded in night."

The steed was in front of him, waiting. Don Aparicio spoke while sitting on a bench. He heard footsteps. It was the young taksa mayordomo.

"Master! And the kestrel?" It must be hungry, I think. It's shuffling about on its perch," he said.

"There's no meat?"

"No, master, there isn't."

Don Aparicio stood up. He removed a knife from his pocket, He opened the largest blade and sharpened it against the courtyard post. He approached his steed.

"You, swift flyer, shall give him your flesh."

He grasped a section of the horse's neck, holding it

tightly with his left hand, and with one great stroke, sliced it off. The mayordomo trembled. The horse stepped back and lurched upward suddenly on its hind legs.

Don Aparicio headed for the saddling shed. The kestrel observed him anxiously. The young master ripped off a piece of the horse flesh and held it out to the bird. The kestrel devoured it. He continued feeding it bits of flesh until the only thing left in his hands was a piece of horse skin and the blood that had dribbled off, staining his fingers.

"Come here, now!" he shouted to the bird. He held it with both hands, went out to the courtyard and placed it on his shoulder. The kestrel clutched calmly to his jacket.

"It would be best it I went away with you and left the solitary souls of this town to wander where they will," he exclaimed with sudden joy.

The horse's chest was now covered with blood. "Just like me, Halcón! Like me, and nobody else!" He said as he climbed up on the animal. The mayordomo opened the gate. Night was falling.

* *

The Varayok', the two prefects, the town council members, the men who allotted tasks, and some women accompanied Irma to her house. Félix followed behind.

The mayor, the alderman and the rural prefect went into

the house. The residents of Alk'amare filled the street.

When Irma raised her mantilla, the Varayok' looked at her; the Indian's eyes, unstirring and fixed, as in some deep sleep, began to clear; resting on the broad silver head of his staff, he straightened himself, and said to her in Quechua, clearly enunciating the words:

"Child, we have come to understand that you are the only "family" of the deceased. You have cried with us, with your ayllu, you have sat vigil too, squatting on the ground. Don Mariano is now a son of Alk'amare; we have nailed the cross of our ayllu on his grave. We shall build a house for you in the district, with its own yard and molle tree; we shall also build you a patio. Alk'amare is a big place. In two months everything will be finished. You will sew vests and blouses for your ayllu ... for some time you may weep."

He ordered the women to come in, and he went away with the prefects.

She thought she would cry torrents, calling out to her mother for the first time, calling to her younger brothers. But her tears slid from her face and onto her breast and she felt the warm stream in silence. The women of Alk'amare watched her and yet knew not how to approach the young woman.

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