

READING JOSE MARIA ARGUEDAS' LETTERS
BUILDING COMMUNICATION BRIDGES IN MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY
PERUVIAN SOCIETY

by

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Art and Sciences in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Pittsburgh

2014

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH
KENNETH P. DIETRICH SCHOOL OF ART AND SCIENCES

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The life and production of the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas (1911-1969) show his capacity to build communication bridges among different cultural and social groups. It was likely the confluence of historical, sociological, and emotional factors that intersected Arguedas' life that gave him the capacity to communicate with different cultural groups within Peruvian society. Arguedas' capacity to build intercultural bridges is shown throughout all of his communication practices (literary and non-literary). His literary production (stories, novels, and poems) has been thoroughly studied; nevertheless, other communication practices such as his letters have not. The goal of this dissertation is to trace how Arguedas is constructing his voice through his letters and in doing so, how he is producing experimental strategies to present himself as a communication bridge so as to invite Peruvian society to be able to reach a better understanding.

This dissertation is divided in two parts. The first part focuses on how Arguedas constructs an image of himself through his letters. The second part of the dissertation focuses on the analysis of how Arguedas describes his world. Affective language present in his letters is a key element to interweave the different sections, while attempting to find the different communicational strategies that allowed Arguedas to construct his voice.

By so constructing his persona, he reveals his communication strategy of presenting himself as a pliable verbal platform between cultures of the Peruvian Andes and the Westernized coast. Nowadays this exceptional bridging capacity is better understood than ever before because he foretold what was going to happen in the future.

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PREFACE

This dissertation is the synergy of many events, academic and non-academic. Two courses I took during my PhD studies motivated me to work on this research topic: “Voices of Remembrance” with Professor Ronald Zboray in the Communications Department, and “Andean Literature” with Professor Elizabeth Monasterios in the Hispanic Languages and Literatures Department. In the first course I realized the importance of oral history as a complementary method of working with written texts; and in the second one I discovered that the writer José María Arguedas is fundamental to understanding Peru, my country.

I started working on Arguedas’ letters in 2008 when I got a summer fellowship from the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. I am very grateful for this scholarship because it enabled me, for the first time, to approach José María Arguedas’ Archives at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, led by Carmen María Pinilla, main editor of the publication of Arguedas’s letters. This fellowship also made it possible for me to travel to Andahuaylas, the writer’s birthplace, where I could appreciate how he has been transformed, with the passing of years, into the cultural hero of the city.

When I started my research, there were eight books published featuring Arguedas’ letters, but currently there are thirteen. When reading Arguedas’ letters I realized the infinite source of research that constitutes the life and work of this Peruvian writer. In my original plan I wanted to study not only the letters but also his newspaper articles, essays, and the reception of his works. However, the more I delved into the research, the more I understood that each one of these primary sources is a corpus for a different dissertation.

Being closer to the writer's life from his letters has enabled me to meet many people who knew him personally during his lifetime; through them I have learned more not only about Arguedas but also about Peru, probably because the writer was such a poignant and faithful reflection of his country. I thank all Arguedas' friends whom I interviewed, but I keep special memories of Hildebrando Ibañez, childhood friend of Arguedas, who at the time of the interview was a hundred years old. When I listened to him I felt closer to Arguedas. Ibañez was my first interviewee and he illuminated the rest of my research. Another interviewee for whom I keep special gratitude and affection is the poet Pedro Lastra, who was the last person I could interview. I found in both men the nobility that seems to characterize Arguedas' close friends. It will be the purpose of further study to venture more in depth into these oral histories.

Completing this dissertation involved undergoing almost an Arguedian agony because of the difficulties I faced at both the academic and personal levels. In fact, it would not have been possible for me to complete this project without the support of many people. First, I want to thank my advisor Professor Ronald Zboray, who trusted me even though I had to return to my country before completing my degree. He never ceased to advise me at a distance. His thoroughness and suggestions have been extremely helpful. I also thank the members of my committee, Dr. Brent Malin, Dr. Gordon Mitchell, and Professor Elizabeth Monasterios for their patience and willingness to read this work.

The support of Mary Hamler and Brandi Sinclair has been crucial to reaching this final stage of my PhD studies, because they always managed to find a magic solution for all administrative matters that arose in the process. I am very thankful also to my older brother, Ricardo, without whose financial support I would have been unable to return to Pittsburgh several times to work with my advisor and to keep my legal status as an "international student" in the

United States. Special thanks go to my friends Arlette Jesús, Martha Mantilla and Elvia de Perez, who always gave me emotional support and love whenever I returned to Pittsburgh, making me feel at home; also to Abelardo Sánchez-León, chair of the department of Communication at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, who gave me all the necessary work licenses for traveling to the United States, and to Gonzalo Portocarrero, who was always attentive to my dissertation progress. Finally, I thank to Marvin Liberman, Isabel Bastos, and Eileen Rizo-Patron, not only for helping me in the process of translation and editing but mainly for their Arguedian friendship.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ARGUEDAS IN BETWEEN

The life and production of the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas (1911-1969) shows his capacity to build communication bridges among different cultural and social groups. Arguedas is a model of intercultural communication within the specific Peruvian context.

Arguedas represents the intersection between Peruvian cultural and intellectual traditions. His case is paradigmatic because as a child, in the early twentieth century, he was nourished on Andean oral culture, a rich resource that he later expressed in his literature. This interaction with indigenous people was not only influential but determinant in his life. During his childhood among them he learned Quechua, and was embedded in Andean culture, which nurtured his sensitivity towards the Peruvian Andean world to the point that he considered himself one of them. Arguedas, however, belonged to a white middle class family from an Andean Peruvian city, which typically dealt with their indigenous population purely as a labor force and did not share the same cultural traditions.¹ It was due to his biographical circumstances that made him a rare, if not unique, case in Peru. Arguedas' mother passed away when he was three years old; his father

¹ However, during the early twentieth century, it was common that middle class families from Andean regions in Peru spoke both Spanish and Quechua. Indeed, Arguedas felt more comfortable speaking Quechua in his early childhood. It was only later, when he was around eight years old, that he began to speak Spanish fluently. José María Arguedas, "Yo Soy Hechura de mi Madrastra [I Am the Handiwork by My Stepmother]," *Martín Revista de Artes y Letras* 10 and 11 (2004): 195-198.

traveled constantly, leaving Arguedas with his stepmother, who liked to “punish” him by requiring that he live with the indigenous servants; he slept with them, ate with them, suffered with them, sang with them.² This gave him the opportunity to share more of his life with native people than with white people.³ This unusual upbringing between two disparate cultures shaped Arguedas’ view of Peruvian society. His case is unusual because there is no other Peruvian writer who was both white⁴ and simultaneously immersed in indigenous culture since early childhood without being separated from his own culture, and in this process identified equally with both cultures.⁵

Arguedas’ multidisciplinary production, complex personality, and dual identity as a white Peruvian who grew up among indigenous people has provided researchers with a wellspring of investigative opportunities. Arguedas’ work has been studied from multiple perspectives and wide-ranging academic fields: literature, anthropology, sociology, education, and folklore. However, he has not been studied properly within the field of communication.⁶

² José María Arguedas, “Yo Soy Hechura de mi Madrastra [I Am the Handiwork by My Stepmother],” *Martín Revista de Artes y Letras* 10 and 11 (2004): 195-198.

³ Felix Roberto Ochoa Salazar transcribes an autobiographical presentation that Arguedas made at The First Encounter of Peruvian Fiction Writers [El Primer Encuentro de Narradores Peruanos] in 1965. Felix Roberto Ochoa Salazar, *José María Arguedas, el Retorno del Peregrino* (Andahuaylas, Perú: Ediciones Gritos del Sol, 2004), 60-70.

⁴ When I say “white,” or “indigenous” I refer, as Arguedas did, to the culture and not the color of skin, although in his case, he was racially “white.”

⁵ Peruvian writers such as Ciro Alegria (1909-1967) or earlier Clorinda Matos de Turner (1852-1909), belonging to the Creole culture, were empathetic with indigenous cultures and portrayed a positive image of them in their novels. However, none of these authors lived with the indigenous as Arguedas did, nor shared their beliefs and traditions.

⁶ The only author who addresses Arguedas’ production from a communicative perspective is the literary critic Julio Ortega. However, his communicational analysis focuses specifically on Arguedas’ novel, *Deep Rivers* and it is a literary/semiotic analysis of the novel’s narrative. Julio Ortega, *Texto, Comunicación y Cultura en Los Ríos Profundos de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo y la Participación, 1982); Julio Ortega, “The Plural Narrator and the Quandary of Multiple Communication in Arguedas’s *Deep Rivers*,” in *José María Arguedas: Reconsiderations for Latin American Studies*, ed. Ciro A. Sandoval and Sandra M. Boschetto-Sandoval (Ohio: Ohio University, Center for International Studies, 1998), 199-207. Fernando Rivera has published a book that contains a chapter with an approach to understanding the sensory communication in Arguedas literature. Fernando Rivera, *Dar la Palabra. Ética, Política y Poética de la Escritura en Arguedas* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2011).

It was likely the confluence of historical, sociological, and emotional factors that intersected Arguedas' life that gave him the capacity to communicate with different cultural groups within Peruvian society. This bridging communicative capacity allows Arguedas and his work to function as a complex model of intercultural communication, as relevant now as it was in his own lifetime. Arguedas' capacity to build communicative bridges is better understood nowadays than in the past because he sensed earlier than his contemporaries the significant changes Peruvian society had been experiencing with the increasing process of internal migration. As Gustavo Gutierrez has said recently, Arguedas is situated more in our future than in our past, a future that is continuously shaped in the hands of Peruvians.⁷

Arguedas' capacity to build intercultural bridges is shown throughout all of his communication practices (literary and non-literary). His literary production (stories, novels, and poems) has been thoroughly studied; nevertheless, other communication practices such as his letters have not. Most Arguedas specialists have not focused on these discursive practices in a systematic way, probably due to the fact that Arguedas' letters have been published relatively recently. Roland Forgues, the first editor to publish Arguedas' letters has used some of these letters to analyze Arguedas' literary production.⁸ The accessibility of the letters nowadays is allowing Arguedas' readers to have a new perspective in Arguedian studies.⁹

The goal of this dissertation is to trace how Arguedas is developing his voice through his letters and in doing so, how he is producing experimental strategies to fashion himself as a

⁷ Gustavo Gutierrez, *Entre las Calandrias* (Lima: CEP, 2011), 106.

⁸ Roland Forgues in *José María Arguedas del Pensamiento Dialéctico al Pensamiento Trágico: Historia de una Amistad*, uses the letters Arguedas addressed to his friend, Manuel Moreno Jimeno.

⁹ See, for example: Cecilia Esparza, "Un niño con ojos y oídos de adulto: autorrepresentación en la obra epistolar de José María Arguedas," in *Arguedas: La Dinámica de los Encuentros Culturales* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2013), 69-80.

communication bridge so as to invite Peruvians to be able to reach a better understanding of their society.

The analysis of Arguedas' letters shows how he responded to the specific nature of this communicative media, which is addressed to far more specific audiences than his formal literary work and thus provides a sharper insight into his communication strategies.

1.1.1 Arguedas and Cultural Peruvian Context

Since the time of the Conquest, Peru has been divided into two cultural and socio-economic groups: indigenous people and creole elite. Even though this cultural division has been blurred significantly in Lima and other cities on the coast of Peru, it still remains in the political structure of the entire country. In analyzing Arguedas' strategies for communicating with diverse social groups, we may discover a key communication path that can be emulated to confront yet unresolved social conflicts that exist in contemporary Peruvian society.

Shining Path,¹⁰ the terrorist group that damaged Peruvian social and political life for twenty years, emerged in part as a consequence of the social injustice that indigenous populations suffer in the Andean regions of the country. White/mestizo Peruvians who lived in the cities did not care about indigenous people who were victims of terrorism in the *sierra* (highlandss). Even currently, after Peru's Truth and Reconciliation Commission submitted its final report in 2003, there continues to be a lack of interest on the part of Peruvian citizens and the media to vindicate and

¹⁰ "Shining Path" was a faction of the Communist Party of Peru (PCP), which was organized at the National University of San Cristobal de Huamanga in the late 1960s. Its leader was a former professor and philosopher Abimael Guzman. However, the group started to be visible through violent actions in the early 1980s. The group drew its name from the writings of Jose Carlos Mariategui, the influential Peruvian intellectual and founder of the Socialist Party of Peru; Mariategui wrote "Marxism-Leninism will open the shining path to revolution." The complete name of "Shining Path" was the "Communist Party of Peru on the Shining Path of Jose Carlos Mariategui."

support the victims of violence, the majority of who were indigenous. Peruvian society does not want to remember but prefers to forget what it considers inconvenient to be remembered. Similarly, in Arguedas' times during mid-twenty century, Peruvians did not acknowledge the injustice suffered by indigenous people since colonial times. People in power accepted this suffering as part of the system. Arguedas rebelled to this common indifference and denounced the injustices through his writing. He made an effort to reconstruct Peruvian memory throughout all his work showing a realistic picture of the evolution of Peruvian society as opposed to the one created by the aristocratic elite. In this process, he created intercultural bridges, being himself a bridge. On the one hand, through his work Arguedas allowed the dominant groups to learn about the "invisible" indigenous; on the other hand, through his life he allowed indigenous people to sense that it is possible that a white man suffers and enjoys the same as they do. In him and through him they found a voice.

In the 1960s, the decade in which Arguedas' last novel appeared, internal migration increased, producing major interactions among different groups in Peru. Since then, social classes, races, traditions, and languages coexist in a dynamic interplay with past and present. Arguedas was able to cross the nation's boundaries of difference before the process of internal migration significantly increased in Peru. Throughout his life Arguedas revealed the "hidden" native Andean world to the white elite and discovered the cultural consequences of *mestizaje* (miscegenation).

Arguedas understood *mestizaje* as a cultural concept and not as a biological one. As quoted by Elena Aibar Ray, Arguedas considered that when we refer to the term *mestizo*, "We speak in cultural terms; we do not take into account at all the concept of race. Anyone in Peru can see racially white indigenous people and dark skinned people who are western in their behavior" ["Hablamos en términos de cultura; no tenemos en cuenta para nada el concepto de raza.

Quienquiera puede ver en el Perú indios de raza blanca y sujetos de piel cobriza, occidentales por su conducta.”].¹¹ Arguedas was himself a *mestizo*, a person in the middle of two cultures, independently of the color of his skin. He did not believe in the recovery of a “pure” indigenous culture. In this regard, Silvia Spitta asserts that “Arguedas’ ethnographic studies show that Andean cultures had been continually adapting and transforming themselves since the Conquest”;¹² and that the term “Indian” serves only as a marker that refers to an individual who is closer to the original Quechua culture than to a *mestizo* culture.

Peru, like many others colonized Latin American countries, has developed as the result of the interaction of local indigenous and European cultures. This dichotomy, however, was never static; in the process of cultural encounter there has been a complex interaction that has produced a diversity of identities. Throughout all his trips around the cities in the Andean region and on the coast of Peru, Arguedas himself experienced this dynamic process during his life.

In a letter addressed to his editor, Gonzalo Losada, Arguedas expresses the changes he himself experienced along with the changes produced in Peruvian society. He writes: “In fifty six years, I have changed Gonzalo, from the pure myth, from the almost absolute magical world, to what seems to be the twenty-first century. It is not easy to survive a change, a terrible process of change.”¹³ Indeed, Arguedas moved from one extreme of Peruvian culture to the other, which does not imply this movement was absolute.

¹¹ Elena Aibar Ray, *Identidad y Resistencia Cultural en las Obras de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1992), 43.

¹² Silvia Spitta, *Between Two Waters: Narratives of Transculturation in Latin America* (Houston, TX: Rice University Press), 142.

¹³ “Yo en cincuenta y seis años, he cambiado don Gonzalo, desde el puro mito, desde lo mágico casi total, hasta lo que parece ser el siglo XXI. No es fácil sobrevivir a un cambio, a un proceso de cambio tan feroz.” José María Arguedas to Gonzalo Losada, Lima December 21, 1967, cited by Alberto Flores Galindo, in *Dos Ensayos Sobre José María Arguedas* (Lima: SUR, 1992), 26.

Authors such as Homi Bhabha have rejected the western approach to intercultural interaction as a binary system umbrella. In *The Location of Culture* Bhabha argues that to sustain a binary system to understand cultural interaction will not allow room for a more complex process of transgression and hybridization between cultures.¹⁴ Bhabha asserts “An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of ‘fixity’ in the ideological construction of otherness. Fixity, as the sign of cultural/historical/racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition.”¹⁵ However, in colonized countries like Peru, a feudal/binary economic system was the starting point of social interactions and it still existed in early Republic times.

The Peruvian economic system based on the ownership of land reinforced the cultural differences between white elite and indigenous people. Since colonial times, it has always been the white elite who had power over indigenous population.¹⁶ Arguedas experienced this dichotomy and later represented it in his earlier novels. Later on, through his own life and ethnographic studies, he noticed that Peruvian society was changing and could not be represented as a pure dichotomy. He shows those changes in later literary creations. However, Arguedas was not sure about the final result of these changes in Peruvian society. In his last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and The Fox from Down Below*, where he portrays the process of migration from the Andes to the coast, he does not have all the answers for understanding the complex process of intercultural interaction produced by internal migration, leaving the questions open for future generations. The Agrarian Reform in Peru was established only in 1969, the same year Arguedas died, by the

¹⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁵ Ibid., 66.

¹⁶ José Carlos Mariátegui, *7 Ensayos de Interpretación de la Realidad Peruana* (Lima: Biblioteca Amauta, 2005).

military regime of Peruvian President Juan Velasco Alvarado.¹⁷ This change in the Peruvian economic system had effects upon cultural interactions, and favored migration from the Andean region to the coast. Arguedas had the intuition to see in advance the consequences of this process of internal migration.

Alberto Flores Galindo points out that there is a connection between the work of Arguedas and the evolution of Peruvian society; Arguedas' literary work changed from small Andean town setting in his first story, *Agua*, where the division between white and indigenous cultures was more defined if compared to the chaotic industrialized port on the coast in *The Fox from Up Above and The Fox from Down Below*, where the processes of cultural interaction produced by migration created a conflictive intercultural communication and unresolved identities.¹⁸

Because the difficulties that Peruvian cultures have in communicating with each other are reflected in Arguedas' life and work, they both can help to explain Peruvian social conditions, even more in our own times. It seems that the awareness of the significance of Arguedas and his work is increasing. Currently, in Peru, academics and common people alike sense the importance of his life—even though they have not read his work completely—to the point that in his hometown, there are parks, streets, and public libraries that have been renamed after him. Andahuaylas, the city where Arguedas was born, has erected a special memorial in his honor. His remains were moved from Lima to Andahuaylas in 2004 without the permission of his widow, Sybila Arredondo. This event produced a controversy about who has the rights over Arguedas' remains, the people or the family, and it has generated much debate among common people and

¹⁷ Mariano Alvarado, "Movimiento Campesino y la Reforma Agraria en el Perú" *Nueva Sociedad* 35 (1978): 103-113.

¹⁸ Alberto Flores Galindo, *Dos Ensayos sobre José María Arguedas* (Lima: Sur, 1992), 15

intellectuals, as portrayed in the media.¹⁹ Ironically, Arguedas and his work were not so well received in the past. Arguedas was often misunderstood and his work was not appreciated as it is today.²⁰

In 2011, Peru celebrated Arguedas' centennial. Many academic, artistic, and popular activities have been successfully organized in different cities in the country. However, even the popular demand to proclaim the year of 2011 as the "Year of the Centennial of José María Arguedas," the official government instead declared the year 2011 as the "Year of the Centennial of Macchu Picchu to the World," which shows that even today the official discourse prefers to make Arguedas' claim for social equality invisible, instead highlighting a Peruvian touristic attraction.

Arguedas' life and work are situated along the borders between the Andes and the Coast, literature and anthropology, popular culture and intellectual elite, orality and literacy. This "in between" position of alterity, marginality, and hybridity, on the one hand, made him more sensitive to different cultural groups. On the other hand, it also reinforced an internal conflict that he could never completely resolve. In fact, his inner turmoil ended in his suicide, which as we are going to see later in this dissertation, he used to construct a metaphor for the ending of a cycle in Peruvian history.²¹ As long as he was alive, Arguedas never stopped writing, even in his greatest moments of anguish, including the moment before his death, when he wrote his last letter, which ultimately

¹⁹ Felix Roberto Ochoa Salazar, *José María Arguedas el Retorno del Peregrino* (Andahuaylas, Perú: Ediciones Gritos del Sol, 2004).

²⁰ Alberto Flores Galindo, *Dos Ensayos*, 5.

²¹ José Maria Arguedas committed suicide in 1969 when he was fifty-eight years old. His suicide has been used by some intellectuals as an indicator of the impossibility of negotiating between Andean culture and western capitalism. However, we should be careful to relate Arguedas' suicide directly to social causes.

appeared as the epilogue to *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*. In this novel, his life, his writing, and his death meld together into one piece.²²

Professionally, Arguedas always straddled the two disciplines of literature and anthropology. Arguedas used literature as a tool to express his anthropological findings.²³ His work has generally been misunderstood by academics of both fields. The most famous example of this miscomprehension was an intellectual debate on a novel he published in 1964, *Todas las Sangres* [All the Bloods].²⁴ The discussants in this debate were literary critics (Alberto Escobar, José Miguel Oviedo, Anibal Quijano, and Sebastián Salazar Bondy), an ethno-sociologist (Henri Favre), a sociologist (Jorge Bravo Bresani), and an anthropologist (José Matos Mar). All of them shared a common interest in the relationship between literary creation and social sciences in Peru. Even though *Todas las Sangres* was a literary production, the only one who focused on its literary elements was Alberto Escobar, the other discussants adopted a severe scientific sociological/anthropological perspective, judging this creative piece as a scientific work, and arguing that Arguedas' novel was wrong because it represented an inaccurate picture of Peruvian social reality. This assertion devastated the novelist.²⁵ He felt that his whole life had been a failure because he wrote about something he had lived. Indeed, Arguedas considered that his novel, even though it was a literary creation, was also a testimony based on his life experience and his

²² Arguedas' suicide has been object of several speculations. He had a very sensitive personality, intense headaches, and difficulty in sleeping. It was probably the combination of social circumstances and his traumatic early experiences (his mother' death, frequent absence of the father, bad relations with his step family), that triggered a biological predisposition to depression; which shaped his particular writing style. Santiago Stucchi, "La Depresión de José María Arguedas," *Revista de Neuro-Psiquiatría* 66,3 (Sept. 2003): 171-184.

²³ There are other Latin American writers such as the Cubans Lydia Cabrera or Miguel Barnet, who also used ethnography as a source of information for their literary creations. However, as emphasized earlier, Arguedas learned and internalized indigenous beliefs by his own life experience with them before he becomes an ethnographer. Ethnography only gave him a methodology to order the information of a world he already knew. This did not happen in the case of the Cuban writers.

²⁴ This debate happened at the Institute of Peruvian Studies in Lima on 23 June 1965.

²⁵ Guillermo Rochabrún, ed., *La Mesa Redonda sobre "Todas las Sangres"* (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2000), 38.

ethnographic studies. In the aftermath of this unfortunate episode, Arguedas wrote a discourse “No soy un aculturado” [I Am Not an Acculturated Man] and presented it when he won the “Inca Garcilazo de la Vega” award in 1968 (this discourse was included as a preface in his last novel *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*). In this presentation, Arguedas argues that his life experience had formed in him a mixed but no less legitimate culture, which therefore gave him keen insight into two seemingly disparate cultures, the indigenous and creole/white cultures of Peru. He described himself as a “happy daemon” who speaks in Christian and indigenous languages, in Spanish and Quechua. Authors such as Appadurai²⁶ would easily interpret this expression as hybridity or negotiation; however, Arguedas emphasizes throughout his novels and his own life that the difference between these two cultures remained, and the coexistence was a dynamic interplay but not a complete negotiation.

Viewed through the lens of postcolonial theories, which consider that postcolonial writers are those who interact with the dominant colonial discourse and at the same time try to subvert it, it might be argued that Arguedas tried to represent indigenous people, not being himself an indigenous. Postcolonial authors such as Bhabha and Spivak have centered their studies on the problem of how—and by whom—subaltern cultures are represented.²⁷ The problem of representation, however, should be handled carefully in the case of Arguedas. As mentioned earlier, Arguedas straddled two cultures since his childhood. During his early years his identification was far closer to indigenous people; culturally, he was one of them. Therefore, when he represents indigenous culture, he is representing also his own culture. However, Arguedas’

²⁶ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2003)

²⁷ Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonial Discourses and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Homi Bhaba, ed., *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 66-111.

accessibility to the hegemonic dominant system makes it impossible to consider him as a subaltern. In any case, being part of the indigenous culture allowed him to represent it more accurately even though he himself was not a subaltern. Indeed, Arguedas said that what motivated him to write his first short stories about indigenous people (*Agua*) was the fact that Peruvian writers such as López Albuja and Ventura García Calderón did not accurately represent indigenous sensitivity and culture. Arguedas was provoked after reading these authors, and writes: “No, I have to write it such as it is, because I have enjoyed it, I have suffered it.”²⁸ This capacity of Arguedas’ to belong to two disparate cultures simultaneously is reflected in his work and offers even contemporary Peruvians the possibility of connecting not only with him, but through him as a bridge to each other as well.

Silvia Spitta posits that Arguedas solved the problem of representation in his novel, *Deep Rivers*, through the use of a transculturated language.²⁹ Considering himself a *mestizo* for whom Spanish was not his mother tongue,³⁰ Arguedas forced his written Spanish to sound like Quechua. In this way, he recreated an indigenous mode of speaking Spanish to give the impression to Spanish readers that they were reading Quechua. Spitta points out that “Arguedas clearly indigenized Spanish, thus situating himself in the place of those who feel strange and estranged from a language that they have been forced to assume their own.”³¹ However, Arguedas did not situate himself in the place of the “other” because he was also the “other.”

²⁸ “No, yo lo tengo que escribir tal cual es, porque yo lo he gozado, yo lo he sufrido” José María Arguedas, “Yo Soy Hechura de mi Madrastra,” *Martín Revista de Artes y Letras* 10 / 11 (2004): 197.

²⁹ Spitta, *Between Two Waters*, 166.

³⁰ There is a controversy about this. Ronald Forgues points out that Arguedas himself has created a myth about his early years as monolingual in Quechua. Forgues considers that it is not until Arguedas is protected from his stepmother by the indigenous that Arguedas is immersed in Quechua culture. In his three first years of age, Arguedas belonged culturally and biologically to a family who was white and spoke Spanish. Ronald Forgues, ed., *Arguedas y los Rios Profundos* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires Du Mirail, 2004), 23-48.

³¹ Spitta, *Between Two Waters*, 166.

1.1.2 Theoretical Framework

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of Arguedas' work, this dissertation requires an interdisciplinary approach. Therefore, I am using a theoretical framework that includes literary, anthropological, sociological, and communication sources.

Arguedas and his work can be compared to a multifaceted prism. The literary and anthropological facets of his work have been thoroughly studied. However, as explained earlier, there is no significant bibliography that addresses a communication approach to Arguedas' work. The two authors I found are Julio Ortega, who is concerned about the relation between communication and culture in Arguedas' novel, *Deep Rivers*³² and Fernando Rivera Rivera,³³ who has an interesting approach to the sensory communication in Arguedas' literature, taking into account not only the words in the texts but the sounds produced by animals or nature, which have a meaning inside the novels. Ortega focuses on the way the dialogues of the different characters in *Deep Rivers* reveal a multiple act of speech. According to him, the act of speech in *Deep Rivers* is produced not only through the characters but also between the characters and the objects; the objects themselves speak. For example, the main character Ernesto in *Deep Rivers*, believes that the ancient Inca stones speak; he asks his father: "Do the stones sing during the night?" and his father answer: "it's possible."³⁴ Ortega points out in regard to *Deep Rivers*: "Culture as a source of information is able to reorder and restore a full meaning of the act of speech."³⁵ Ortega analyzes the dialogues among the characters in *Deep Rivers* as an act of speech following the basic outline

³² Ortega, *Texto, Comunicación y Cultura*.

³³ Rivera, *Dar la Palabra. Ética, Política y Poética de la Escritura en Arguedas*.

³⁴ Jose Maria Arguedas, *Los Rios Profundos* (Editorial Horizonte, 2001), 17.

³⁵ Julio Ortega, *Texto, Comunicación y Cultura*, 24.

of Roman Jakobson's theory.³⁶ Ortega is considered one of the most important specialist scholars on Arguedas among these others: Sara Castro- Klarén, Antonio Cornejo Polar, Angel Rama, William Rowe, Martín Lienhard, Alberto Escobar, and Roland Forgues. All of them are literary critics who have analyzed Arguedas' literary production in detail. All these authors have written books about Arguedas that are now considered classics. In this dissertation, in addition to Arguedas' formal literary production, I include this important classic literary scholarship, one by one below, on Arguedas' work to help in my analysis of his literary work and his *in between* position.

The first critical literary study on Arguedas' work is Sara Castro-Klarén's book, *El Mundo Mágico de José María Arguedas* [The Fictional World of Jose Maria Arguedas]. In the introduction of this book it is pointed out that to understand the life and work of Arguedas it is impossible to deny the constant presence of Peruvian national reality in his work. Castro-Klarén writes: "Arguedas is an auscultator of the past and the present and builds an image of the future worthy of credit."³⁷ These words precisely describe Arguedas' work. His novels are embedded in the then-present, but operate simultaneously as premonitions of the future. Castro-Klarén recognizes the artistic value in Arguedas' work; she considers, however, that his last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, is not only an unfinished work but a minor novel.³⁸ Nowadays, however, it is considered an avant-garde novel that breaks with traditional writing methods to address the challenging topic of intercultural interaction as a result of internal

³⁶ Jakobson's theory about the speech communication process establishes that in every speech the addresser sends a message to the addressee; the message uses a code (language that is known to both the addresser and addressee); the message has a context and it is transmitted through a medium, such as live speech or writing. Each one of these aspects has a linguistic function in the communication process. Roman Jakobson, *Ensayos de Lingüística General* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1981), 87-88.

³⁷ Sara Castro Klarén, *El Mundo Mágico de José María Arguedas* (Lima: IEP ediciones, 1973), 13. Translation is mine.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 199.

migration. Castro-Klarén published her book during the early seventies, when Arguedas' work had not been completely understood. Nevertheless, forty years later, it is not possible to say that *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* is a minor novel. In any case, the main argument in Castro-Klarén's book is Arguedas' extraordinary sensitivity to intuit the historical Peruvian reality of his own time and that of the future.³⁹ In this way, Castro-Klarén acknowledges the anthropological value of Arguedas' literary work expressed through artistic language. This study helps me to approach Arguedas' position between anthropology and literature.

The next study of Arguedas' literary work is Antonio Cornejo Polar's book, *Los Universos Narrativos de José María Arguedas* [Narrative Universes of José María Arguedas]. In this book Cornejo Polar analyzes in detail the main novels of Arguedas and reinforces the idea that Arguedas foretold the future. Cornejo Polar's book was written twenty years later than Castro Klarén's; therefore, his interpretation of Arguedas' last novel is more complete. In regard to this novel, Cornejo Polar asserts: "the meaningful dimension of *The Fox* is the result of what was not written...and it is not one of little significance: it is where the meaning of the silence of death resides."⁴⁰ Cornejo Polar refers to the fact that Arguedas' death constitutes also the end of his last novel; the narrator becomes silent to allow Peruvian readers to complete the story/history with their own lives. Arguedas tried to describe in this novel the future history of Peruvian society, a history that only Peruvians could narrate; Arguedas then kept silent. Cornejo Polar asserts that "in *The Fox* to die and to dawn appear to be interwoven. The entire world, imprisoned in Chimbote, is seen as ferment, as a uniform genetic form in which reality and direction only will happen in the

³⁹ Ibid., 206.

⁴⁰ "Lo no escrito resulta ser una dimensión del sentido de *El Zorro*...y no la de menor importancia: allí reside la significación del silencio de la muerte". Antonio Cornejo Polar, *Los Universos Narrativos de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1997), 228.

future.”⁴¹ Cornejo Polar’s approach is astute; he notices that the cultural “effervescence” described in *The Fox* is like the chaos that precedes creation. The cultural interactions that happened in the port of Chimbote, Perú, during the 1960s, and described by Arguedas in his last novel, foretell the complexity and difficulty of cultural interactions within Peruvian society in the future. This book allows me to analyze the evolution of Peruvian social reality as it was expressed in Arguedas’ novels.

William Rowe, mentioned above, has collected his main essays about Arguedas’ work in the book *Ensayos Arguedianos* [Arguedian Essays]. Rowe’s book is helpful in analyzing the relationship between orality and literacy in Arguedas’ literary pieces; one of the main elements that Rowe highlights in his study is the role played by music and sound in Arguedas’ literary pieces. Rowe asserts: “In all of Arguedas’ work, music gives a model of knowledge that does not separate subject from object.”⁴² In fact, it is possible to sense the sonority of Arguedas’ novels, mainly in *The Fox*, which has a dialogical structure. Arguedas’ novels cannot be read only with the eyes; it is necessary to read his work with all the senses, especially with the ears. Arguedas embedded his writing in a sea of orality. He gives voice to the sounds of nature⁴³ and to the sounds of Andean culture through the recreation of folkloric songs, Andean instruments and dances, and the frequent use of dialogues. This book is therefore useful in understanding the role played by sound in Arguedas’ work.

⁴¹ “en *El Zorro*...morir y amanecer aparecen entramados. El mundo íntegro, aprisionado en Chimbote, se ve como un fermento, como una informe fuerza genética cuya realidad y su sentido solo se dará en el futuro” Ibid., 246.

⁴² “En toda la obra de Arguedas, la música suministra un modelo de conocimiento en que no se separan sujeto y objeto” William Rowe, *Ensayos Arguedianos* (Lima: SUR, 1996), 119.

⁴³ R. Murray Schafer’s book, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, pays attention to the different sounds of our environment and how they have evolved. The author coins the term “soundscape” to express the similarity and difference to “landscape.” Part one of this book addresses the sound of nature and it might give some insights to read Arguedas’ literary production. Schaffer, R. Murray, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, Vt.: Destiny Books, 1994).

In regard to the relationship between orality and literacy in Arguedas' work, Rowe cites authors such as Walter Ong,⁴⁴ Marshall McLuhan,⁴⁵ and Jack Goody,⁴⁶ who consider that oral cultures are more synesthetic than those based in writing. Even though these authors have been considered part of the "Great Division" by a new generation of anthropologists and sociolinguists,⁴⁷ nevertheless, they are indeed useful in understanding polyphonic discourse and characteristics of oral culture as described by José María Arguedas in his novels. Mikhail Bakhtin is also an author useful in analyzing dialogism and polyphony in Arguedas' novels. Bakhtin has developed the idea that diverse voices can exist inside one discourse. According to Bakhtin, polyphony is the third age in the history of humanity, after monologism and dialogism. Polyphony implies the acceptance and comprehension of different voices in one discourse. Polyphony is more than hybridity and heterogeneity; it is an ethic of the tolerance of diversity, just what Arguedas tries to convey in his work.⁴⁸

Martin Lienhard is another helpful author in analyzing the oral nature of Arguedas' literary production, as he reinforces the idea of a polyphonic discourse in the writer work, which challenges traditional narrative structures. According to Lienhard, when creating writing close to the spoken word, Arguedas also creates a fictional orality that enables the readers to capture the oral language through writing.⁴⁹ As said before, in novels such as *Deep Rivers*, the author uses

⁴⁴ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London; New York: Methuen, 1982).

⁴⁵ Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (New York: The American Library, 1969).

⁴⁶ Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁴⁷ The "New Literacy Studies" consider that authors such as McLuhan, Ong, and Goody make inaccurate generalizations about oral cultures and cultures with writing, keeping an unnecessary dividing line between orality and literacy. Two important books of the New Literacy Studies are: Silvia Scribner and Michael Cole, *The Psychology of Literacy* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1991); Brian Street, ed., *Cross-Cultural Approaches to Literacy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

⁴⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981); Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

⁴⁹ Martin Lienhard, *Cultura Andina y Forma Novelesca* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1990), 109.

Spanish with a Quechua structure, producing the sensation in Spanish readers that they are reading Quechua. Lienhard points out that in the case of *The Fox*, Arguedas does not mix Spanish and Quechua, but represents the different socio-dialects spoken on the Peruvian coast as a result of internal migration, keeping a dialogic structure with a strong oral component.

In her book, *Voices from the Fuente Viva*, Amy Nauss Millay, addresses writers who have a strong oral component in their style, including Arguedas. One of her essays, “Echoes from Los Ríos Profundos” is dedicated to the analysis of Arguedas’ novel, *Deep Rivers*. In this essay Millay compares Arguedas with Lydia Cabrera, a Cuban writer, in the way that both have similar personal quests. According to Millay, Arguedas and Cabrera faced the same dilemma: “both wrote from within a Western literate culture that they believed threatened oral traditions.”⁵⁰ However, in contrast to Cabrera, Arguedas had the privileged position of being at the same time informant and interpreter and lived the culture he was considering as an ethnographer. Millay’s book, like Lienhard’s book, helps to connect theorists of orality with literary critics. Her study is also helpful in the analysis of Arguedas’ status between anthropology and literature.

Angel Rama approaches Arguedas’ work by taking the term *transculturation* from an anthropological level⁵¹ to a literary one in his major work *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina* [Narrative Transculturation in Latin America]. Rama was interested in the possibilities of resistance that every culture has when confronted with a process of transculturation. He considers that writers like Arguedas are the vehicles or mediators between the native traditional Latin American cultures and modernization. However, the model of transculturation and resistance

⁵⁰ Amy Nauss Millay, *Voices from the Fuente Viva* (Lewisburg, Pa.: Bucknell University Press, 2005), 81.

⁵¹ The concept “transculturation” has a Caribbean origin. The Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term in the 1940s in his book *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar* [Cuban Counterpoint; Tobacco and Sugar]. Ethnographers have used this term to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture.

that Angel Rama proposes is not enough to grasp the reality described by Arguedas in his last novel, which exceeds any process of transculturation described in earlier and less conflictive novels such as *Deep Rivers*.⁵²

Antonio Cornejo Polar considers that “Transculturation would imply, in the long run, the construction of a syncretic plane that finally incorporates in a more or less unproblematic totality two or more languages, two or more ethnic identities, two or more aesthetic codes and historical experiences.”⁵³ As transculturation does not emphasize the tension and conflict that occur inside intercultural interactions, he instead offers as an alternative the concept of *heterogeneity*. *Heterogeneity* addresses intercultural conflict and conveys the idea that in a process of cultural interaction, cultures remain separated and maintain their differences, even though they coexist. In contrast to transculturation, *heterogeneity* does not accept the idea that modernity homogenizes cultures; on the contrary, it emphasizes resistance. However, the problem with the concept of *heterogeneity* is that it goes to the other extreme and makes it difficult to conceptualize any process of negotiation, which though incomplete and conflictive, that exists in Arguedas’ production.

There are other theoretical approaches that come from the intercultural communication field that might be helpful as a starting point in analyzing Arguedas’ life and work, especially Rico Lie. In his book, *Spaces of Intercultural Communication*, Lie addresses some concepts that are possible to relate to Arguedas’ “in between” status (oral/written, rural/city, indigenous/creole, popular culture/elite culture) due to his internal migration experience within Peru. For example, in

⁵² Ángel Rama, *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina* (México, D.F.: Siglo XXI Editores, 2004)

⁵³ Antonio Cornejo Polar, “Mestizaje, Transculturation, Heterogeneity,” in *The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Ana del Sarto, Alicia Ríos and Abril Trigo (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004), 117.

chapter four of his book, Lie explains the different theoretical concepts that express cultural mixing. Lie asserts that these concepts of cultural mixing seem to have replaced “old” concepts, such as acculturation, assimilation, integration, adaptation, and interculturalization.⁵⁴ One of the “new” cultural mixing concepts to which Lie refers is the concept of *contact zones*, developed by James Clifford. This concept relates to the cultural interactions produced when people travel. Lie writes: “The essence of travel and tourism is that they de-locate people for a framed period of time.”⁵⁵ Within the *contact zones* created by the circumstance of traveling, cultures are not considered fixed entities to a specific place anymore. Migration also produces *contact zones* but, in this case, migration is framed in longer periods of time than travel and tourism. Besides, migration produces a change of residence, which implies territorialization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. After considering the different Latin American concepts that refer to cultural mixing, such as *mestizaje*, creolization, transculturation, and hybridization, Lie concludes that independently of the terms, what is important is the idea of cultural mixing through a process of encounter and negotiation. Lie asserts: “The mix is not only in-between cultures, but also in-between what we now have termed the global and the local, or the processes of cultural globalization and cultural localization.”⁵⁶ Rico Lie describes the migrant’s condition of being de-centered using the concept of “nonplace” developed by Marc Auge. Nonplace is a space that cannot be defined as relational or historical or concerned with identity; it is applied to the global-local cultural context.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Lie cites Michel de Certeau, who argues that space and place are not the same. For him, space is a lived place that is created through inter-action. Using the

⁵⁴ Lie, *Spaces of Intercultural Communication* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2003), 83.

⁵⁵ Lie, 83.

⁵⁶ Lie, 88.

⁵⁷ Lie, 121.

distinction between space and place, Lie considers that the processes of globalization and localization are linked to communication spaces.

Lie associates the idea of nonplace to Victor Turner's concepts of liminality and liminoid communication spaces. Liminality, according to Turner is the region of culture where new elements and new combinatory rules may be introduced. In liminality, people play with familiar elements and defamiliarize them.⁵⁸ Lie asserts that the main difference between liminal and liminoid zones of culture is that liminal spaces are found in daily life routines, while liminoid spaces are continuously generated and are found "out-of-daily-life-liminality."⁵⁹ When analyzing the relation between the global and the local, Lie is interested more in the liminoid spaces, where it is possible to find interaction between past and present, global and local; the liminoid spaces are "spaces of intercultural communication" or "zones of transcultures," where identities are fragmented, and where time is a "time in between activities." Lie asserts that "liminoid zones, characterized by cultural coexistence, cultural negotiation, and cultural transformation in-between the global and the local, provide a feeling of alienation."⁶⁰ There are different possibilities of interaction in these liminoid zones. First, coexistence occurs when the elements from different cultures do not interact significantly, even if they share the same liminal/oid space; second, homogenized transculturality occurs when one culture is imposed over others and all liminal/oid spaces evolve toward a similar cultural end space; and finally, hybridized transculturality occurs when there is an ideal negotiation among the different cultures. Manuel Larrú points out that it is after *Deep Rivers*, where the liminal period occurs clearly in Arguedas's novels such as *La Agonía de Rasu Niti* [*The Agony of Rasu Niti*], *Todas Las Sangres* [*All the Bloods*], *El Zorro de Arriba y*

⁵⁸ Ibid., 124.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 127.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 128.

El Zorro de Abajo [*The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*]; but this liminal process starts earlier, in all his previous texts.⁶¹ Lie's description of cultural interactions produced by migration seems to be the closest approach we might have to the cultural interactions experienced by Arguedas and described in his last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*. However, this novel also exceeds these theoretical explanations because in the liminoid spaces of *The Fox* there is more than the simple coexistence of cultures; the interaction among the different cultural elements is conflictive, and neither a homogenized transculturality nor an ideal negotiation is possible. Peruvian—and other Latin American—realities reflected in Arguedas' last novel challenge currently circulating paradigms of intercultural interaction. Even if it sounds contradictory, we might say that in Peruvian society, the cultural interactions produced by migration (internal and external) have generated an unresolved or tensional hybridity, where negotiation among heterogeneous cultures is never complete. Therefore, theoretical approaches such as Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large* or Néstor García Canclini's *Hybrid Cultures*, which emphasize the process of negotiation with the arrival of modernity, are also insufficient for explaining the cultural interactions in Arguedas' novels.⁶² Nevertheless, Arguedas, as an individual, could move across the intercultural conflictive relation that existed among different cultural groups of Peruvian society of his time. He was, as explained before, an exception who perhaps –having psychological problems not solved since childhood—paid the consequences of this “cultural effervescence” with his own life.

⁶¹ Manuel Larrú, “De una Visión Indigenista a una Visión Andina en la Obra de José María Arguedas,” *Con Textos Revista Crítica de Literatura*, 1 (2010): 19.

⁶² Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Nestor Garcia Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

Another element taken into account in this dissertation refers to Cornejo Polar's concept of migration. He suggests that it is not accurate to say that migrants suffer deterritorialization; instead, he asserts that migrants "multiply" their territory because the possibility of speaking from different places opens up through the process of migration. Cornejo Polar understands "place" as being a symbolic representation internalized by the migrants and not a physical setting. Therefore, according to him, a migrant subject is a de-centered subject.⁶³ A migrant like Arguedas, for example, does not have an identifiable territory to which he belongs; a migrant does not belong to a specific place but he or she still has identification with several places.

From a feminist theoretical perspective, "standpoint epistemology" also offers a new logic of knowledge. Standpoint epistemology is concerned with how our traditional conceptions of knowledge disadvantage women and other underrepresented groups, therefore it is necessary to change our standpoint of learning in order to have a better knowledge that does not privilege any position of power. Joyce Nielsen has asserted that standpoint theory starts "with the idea that less powerful members of society have the potential for a more complete view of social reality than others, precisely because of their disadvantaged position."⁶⁴ It is possible to argue that Arguedas, belonging to an unrepresented Andean culture and having at the same time incorporated western culture's meanings of expression, had a more complete view of Peruvian social reality and the capacity to present it to the intellectual elite.

As my discussion suggests, there is a vast body of scholarship from a variety of different disciplines well beyond communication studies that are helpful in formulating a theoretical

⁶³ Antonio Cornejo Polar, "Una Heterogeneidad no Dialéctica: Sujeto y Discurso Migrantes en el Perú Moderno," *Revista Iberoamericana* 6 2 (1979):837-44.

⁶⁴ Joyce Nielsen, ed., *Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press. 1990), 10.

approach to Arguedas' work. The richness of Arguedas' production should be embraced from an interdisciplinary perspective because his work so clearly challenges any theoretical paradigm. Perhaps we should just allow Arguedas to speak for himself. Arguedas' letters might then be, by themselves, a theoretical proposition expressed through a particular language that forces us to read it while leaving all paradigms of cultural interaction aside.

1.2 ARGUEDAS' LETTERS

Letters are a means of communication that allow variations in the process of both writing and reading the message, depending on the historical and social context that exist where the letters are produced. On one hand, the act of writing may be a private, intimate communicative experience; the writer can express his/her feelings towards the recipient more freely than would be possible in the presence of the receiver, especially in the case of love letters.⁶⁵ On the other hand, writing a letter could be a collective process, where letters are read aloud in front of a group of people.⁶⁶ In any case letters are a medium that creates a process of communication in which

⁶⁵ There are studies, however, that show that with the existence of an amanuensis, letters and letter writing "were about the individual self, but not about interiority." See Keith Breckenridge, "Love Letters and Amanuenses: Beginning the Cultural History of the Working Class Private Sphere in Southern Africa, 1900-1933," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, 2 (June 2000): 337-48.

⁶⁶ For example, "The expectation in the eighteenth century was still that letters would be read aloud to family, friends and acquaintances, and or shown around, to give everyone something to talk about." Eve Tavor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1688-1820* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 47.

there is an imaginary immediacy between sender and receiver, even though there is a physical distance.⁶⁷

Deborah Tannen in her book, *Spoken and Written Language*, proposes that the epistolary genre constitutes a bridge between the oral and written discourse, especially if we are referring to informal letters. The epistolary genre allows the author to be contradictory and to show facets that are not normally revealed in other literary genres.⁶⁸ As Bannet points out, “the link between epistolary writing and ordinary speech, and between correspondence and everyday conversation, could not be abandoned because in practice, pace Derrida, letters were a site where speech and writing were constantly rotating into each other’s places.”⁶⁹ In a more metaphoric way, and taking into account only contemporary times, storyteller/writer Julio Ramón Ribeyro argues that there are some similarities between letters and intimate diaries: “Exaggerating a little, it would be possible to say that the pages of a diary are letters which the author addresses to himself and that letters are pages of a diary which the author addresses to a [different] person.”⁷⁰ However, the relationship between letters and diaries can be seen from a different perspective as the Zborays did in a study among antebellum New Englanders; these authors consider that “letters usually bespoke ongoing communication with specific people, whereas diaries maintained the illusion of privacy. Letters expecting an answer read like one side of a discussion, yet usually contain responses to a

⁶⁷ “Although a large portion of epistolary communication has always been businesslike and relatively impersonal, letters are inevitably associated with intimacy. Perhaps the most fundamental fiction of letter writing is that the epistolary utterance, despite the absence of addresser to addressee, if not precisely because of that absence, speaks with an immediacy and intimacy unavailable in the face-to-face conversation that letter writing typically takes as its model. Such intimacy commonly assumes the existence of a certain confidentiality as its enabling condition.” William Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 5.

⁶⁸ Deborah Tannen, *Spoken and Written Language: Exploring Orality and Literacy* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1982).

⁶⁹ Bannet, *Empire of Letters*, 46.

⁷⁰ “Exagerando un poco podría decirse que las páginas de un diario son cartas que el autor se dirige a sí mismo y que las cartas son páginas de un diario que se dirigen a una persona.” Julio Ramón Ribeyro, *La Caza Sutil* (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres S.A., 1976), 10.

previous letter received, along with, perhaps, echoes of several earlier exchanges. Letters were thus interpersonally, not individually, determined.”⁷¹ In the case of Arguedas, the boundary between letters and diaries is not clear because his diaries were intentionally written to address an audience; they were inserted in his last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, as part of the narrative. Besides, his letters constitute not only an instrumental means of communication, but also a possibility of expressing his most intimate sensitivity—as if they were diaries—and sometimes they work as a tool for rethinking his literary projects. It is through letters that Arguedas shares his everyday concerns with a friend, family member, or colleague.

One characteristic of Arguedas’ writing is that it presents itself as being grounded in reality, or at least this seems to be his intention. As mentioned before, in a debate about one of his novels *Todas las Sangres* [*All the Bloods*], he was criticized by some sociologists who considered that the novel did not properly represent the hierarchies in Peruvian society. Arguedas could say in his defense that a novel is fiction and there is no point in criticizing its representation of reality. However, he claimed it was a testimony and if what he was saying in the novel was not the truth, then he had lived in vain.⁷² Arguedas always highlighted the value of his experiences and the importance for him of telling others all about what he had learned through these experiences.

Similar to his literary writing, in his letters Arguedas also displays his attempt to portray and understand reality; this is why when I was searching for a rhetorical figure that could help me to decode Arguedas’ letter writing, I turned to Decker’s use of metonymy, who, following Jacobson, says that if “metonymy is the determining tendency of language in realistic literature,

⁷¹ Ronald J. Zboray and Mary Saracino Zboray, *Everyday Ideas: Socioliterary Experience among Antebellum New Englanders* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006), 17.

⁷² Guillermo Rochabrún, ed. *La Mesa Redonda sobre Todas las Sangres del 23 de Junio de 1965* (Lima: IEP, 2000), 38.

then familiar letter writing is an intensely metonymic discourse inasmuch as it typically abounds in the registry of quotidian ‘realist’ minutiae that become more or less explicitly significant in reference to the addressee’s absence (the occasion of the letter’s composition).”⁷³ Being that Arguedas’ letters are a realistic and familiar form of writing, I expected to find a constant use of metonymy. However, what became apparent was that I could find a far more significant use of metaphors, probably due to the emotional, dramatic, intense, and poetic style Arguedas uses in his letter writing. An example of a metaphor in his letters, which reveals its poetic nature, is when he writes to his brother: “the fire that a man has when called by art is never put out even in agony.”⁷⁴ The metaphor here is the “fire” which represents the inspiration and the creative impulse of an artist like himself.

Arguedas had the opportunity to interact among diverse social and cultural environments not only in Peru but in other countries. His letters are a testimony to it. Arguedas was a prolific correspondent. He wrote letters to his friends, editors, psychoanalyst, and relatives. Even though some of his letters to colleagues or editors show a certain formality, in most of his letters it is possible to sense a strong affective tone. He treated his addressees as if they were close to him even though they were separated by distance. There is a sense of spontaneity in his letters, far more common to find in oral communication. This capacity for expressiveness and for looking for affection is one of the axes along which his letters can be approached; this will be more fully analyzed in the second chapter of this dissertation.

⁷³ Decker, 15.

⁷⁴ “el fuego que tiene el hombre llamado por el arte no se apaga ni en la agonía.” José María Arguedas, Lima, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, Jan., 31, 1944, in Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia Cartas de José María Arguedas a Arístides y Nelly Arguedas, a Rosa Pozo Navarro y Yolanda López Pozo* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1999), 173.

Furthermore, we have to pay attention to the way Arguedas constructs an image of himself through his letters and how both his role as an author and his social context have influenced his self-portrayal, because as Ezell points out: “The dynamic network of writer and reader that in my view characterizes manuscript literary culture and social authorship is created by the process of being an author rather than by the production of a single text.”⁷⁵ Arguedas’ letters are a crucial part of his authorship and nowadays are being read for many people who are not his intended addressees.

Now that most of Arguedas’ letters have been published, we can consider his letters as part of his literary corpus. Given that many of these letters have been only recently published, they have not yet been properly studied. Up to now, there are thirteen books containing his letters,⁷⁶ and several of his letters have been published elsewhere.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Margaret Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 40.

⁷⁶ Roland Forgues, ed., *José María Arguedas: La Letra Inmortal: Correspondencia con Manuel Moreno Jimeno* (Lima: Ediciones de los Ríos Profundos, 1993); John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996); Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas, Recuerdos de una Amistad* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996); Edgar O’Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 1997); Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia: Cartas de José María Arguedas a Arístides y Nelly Arguedas, a Rosa Pozo Navarro y Yolanda López Pozo* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1999); Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en el Valle del Mantaro* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2004); Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Correspondencia entre José María Arguedas y Juan Mejía Baca en la Biblioteca Nacional* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, 2005); Carmen María Pinilla, ed. *Apuntes Inéditos: Celia y Alicia en la Vida de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2007). Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Itinerarios Epistolares: La Amistad de José María Arguedas y Pierre Duviols en Dieciseis Cartas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2011); Enrique Camacho, *Misión en Chimbote y mi encuentro con Arguedas* (Lima: Centro de Estudios y Publicaciones, 2011); Inés Westphalen Ortiz, *El Río y El Mar. Correspondencia José María Arguedas/Emilio Adolfo Westphalen* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011); Carmen María Pinilla, ed. *Arguedas y Barrantes, Dos Amautas* (Lima, Fondo Editorial de la Academia Peruana de la Lengua, 2013). Jaime Gonzales Triana, ed. *Cubapaq A Cuba, José María Arguedas* (Cuzco, Perú: Dirección de Cultura del Cuzco, 2013).

⁷⁷ “Correspondencia entre Hugo Blanco y José María Arguedas,” *Amaru Revista de Artes y Ciencias* no. 11 (Dec. 1969): 12-29; Raúl Adanaqué Velásquez, “Correspondencia entre José María Arguedas y Luis E. Valcárcel,” *La Casa de Cartón, Revista de Cultura* no. 21 (Invierno-Primavera del 2000): 1-18; “Correspondencia entre Hugo Blanco y José María Arguedas,” *Cuadernos Arguedianos* no. 3 (2000): 79-86; Raquel García, ed., “Las Cartas de José María Arguedas a Ángel Rama,” *Fórnix* no. II (Ene-June 2000): 9-26; Carmen María Pinilla, ed., “Cartas del Archivo José María Arguedas de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú: Donaciones Recientes de Fernando de Szyszlo, Blanca Varela, Mario Vargas Llosa, Duccio Bonavia, Haydeé Castagnola y German Garrido Klinge,” *Antropológica* no. 20 (2002): 121-176.

Probably one of the most significant books containing Arguedas' letters was the first because it revealed an intimate side of Arguedas not known before. It appeared in 1993 and was edited by Roland Forgues.⁷⁸ This book includes the letters Arguedas wrote to his best friend, Manuel Moreno Jimeno. In 1996 a controversial book of letters was published that contains correspondence that he addressed to his friend, the American anthropologist John Murra, and also some items sent to his Chilean psychoanalyst, Lola Hofmann.⁷⁹ This book has been polemical because the publication of Arguedas' letters in his role as a psychiatric patient arguably violates principles of medical ethics. For example, on the one hand, Pedro Lastra, the Chilean poet who was an editor and a friend of Arguedas says in his testimony that he was perturbed by the letters Arguedas wrote to his psychoanalyst because these letters reveal private facts that him never revealed to other people. Lastra considers that there should be always a limit in order to respect a private life.⁸⁰ On the other hand, Carmen Maria Pinilla considers that it is impossible to defend the argument of protection of privacy in the case of historical characters like Arguedas, especially when the interest in his complex work continues to increase.⁸¹ In any case, we would say that a figure like Arguedas requires different perspectives of analysis and the letters provide a more intimate approach to the man and his work, which are always interwoven.

These letters also allow scholars to elucidate Arguedas' process of creation even in the middle of an intense psychological illness.

I have reviewed a total of 350 letters published in books and journals. From this body of letters I have selected for closer scrutiny letters addressed to his friends, family members, one of

⁷⁸ Roland Forgues, ed., *José María Arguedas: La Letra Inmortal: Correspondencia con Manuel Moreno Jimeno*.

⁷⁹ John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*.

⁸⁰ O'Hara, *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 113.

⁸¹ Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en el Valle del Mantaro*, 25.

his psychoanalysts, and a few of his editors. In all of them I found particularly relevant information related to Arguedas as a communicator across social difference. I selected fragments of these letters to analyze in depth and from which to quote. After reading all of them as well as the testimonies of some of their addressees, I identified the main topics that appear in these epistolary texts. In doing so, I trace Arguedas' main concerns while he was working as a writer, anthropologist, teacher, and promoter of folkloric music. My selection criterion of the addressees is the closeness Arguedas had with them, professionally, or personally. Following a chronological sequence, I read and analyzed the letters Arguedas wrote to his family members, the letters he wrote to some close friends he met in the 1930s (Manuel Moreno Jimeno, José Ortiz Reyes, and his son Alejandro Ortiz). I have also reviewed Arguedas' more personal letters (to his first wife, Celia Bustamante and one of his lovers, Vilma Ponce). I finally investigated the letters to two editors (Juan Mejía Baca and Pedro Lastra), psychoanalyst (Lola Hoffman), friends he met in the 1940s (Emilio Barrantes, Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, and Pierre Duvois) and two other friends he met in the 1960s (the anthropologist John Murra, and the left-wing activist, Hugo Blanco).

The topics he touched upon among his different addressees may vary but his affective, emotional, intense and sometimes melodramatic communication style is the same and is highlighted throughout all his correspondence. It seems that Arguedas makes an effort to show authenticity and realism through his letters.⁸² It may be possible, though, that he elaborated a

⁸² It is important to point out here the concept of realism proposed by Auerbach. According to Terry Eagleton: "Auerbach's *Mimesis*, one of the great works of literary scholarship, was written between 1942 and 1945 in Istanbul, (...) Auerbach ranges through some of the mighty monuments of Western literature, from Homer, medieval romance, Dante and Rabelais to Montaigne, Cervantes, Goethe, Stendhal and a good many authors besides, scanning their work for symptoms of realism. His criterion for selection, however, is more political than formal or epistemological. The question is whether we can find secreted in the language of a particular text the bustling, workaday life of the common people. For Auerbach as for Mikhail Bakhtin, who was writing his classic work on Rabelais and realism at much the same time that Auerbach was holed up almost bereft of books in Istanbul, realism is in the broadest sense a matter of the vernacular." Book review *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western*

certain “character” of himself in his letters. It is difficult to establish where the “true” Arguedas ends and where the character begins. Nonetheless, when we read the letters we find evidence of one predominant communication style led by the use of feelings to move his or her receptor through the exacerbation of his emotions. He seems to behave the same independently of his varied addressees. Of course, we need to take into account that most of the addressees we are analyzing here are very close to him; even editors, colleagues or his psychoanalyst were considered friends by him. However, if it is the case that Arguedas was creating a character, we could consider according to Edwin Black, that Arguedas, is creating a persona in his letters and that this persona implies a “second persona,” or an “auditor implied.”⁸³ But who could be this implied “second persona”? Could we say that Arguedas acknowledged his role in Peruvian society to the point that he was writing his letters for future readers? This may be a risky assumption. A better approach could be that Arguedas’ letter writing style was more informal, affective, or genuine towards the people who had a close relation with him because he used an “oral style” of communication in his letters. If that is the case, Auerbach’s concept of realism would fit his letter writing, because he belonged to an Andean community in his childhood, where he was embedded in the orality of the Quechua language and, as mentioned in footnote eighty-two, Auerbach’s concept of realism is related to the vernacular. It may result in being difficult to believe within the context of the United States that a writer of letters did not make use of different styles to address different recipients. North American history has a tradition in letter writing which implies following rules given in manuals. In *A Fictive People*, for example, it is stated that in the nineteenth century people in the United States were trained to write differently to different addressees, differentiating clearly

Literature by Erich Auerbach in London Review of Books, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v25/n20/terry-eagleton/pork-chops-and-pineapples>

⁸³ Edwin Black, “The Second Persona,” *Quarterly of Journal Speech* 56 (April 1970): 2.

between relatives or friends. The author of this book asserts: “Some of the formality seen in personal letters of the period doubtlessly derived from models learned in school or read in books or periodicals. The antebellum years spawned a whole genre of books that provided models for letters written on all important occasions and to the different significant people in an individual’s life.”⁸⁴ While this is not the case in Peru, nonetheless it is of course expected that some rules of cordiality and formality be respected, depending on the level of confidence the writer has towards the addressee and on the purpose of the letter. Letter writing manuals aside, Arguedas may be a special case due as well to his affective personality and to the fact that most of his addressees, to whom he regularly sent letters, were close to him. In most of them Arguedas shows his passion for writing, for education and for understanding Peruvian society. He also displays his anxieties and hopes.

To gather information about Arguedas, the man, I conducted oral histories with people familiar with Arguedas’ life and times: friends, students, scholars, family members, and recipients of Arguedas’ letters, which allowed me to have more information about how his life and work have been received.⁸⁵ For conducting the oral interviews, I followed Valerie Raleigh Yow’s guide, *Recording Oral History*.⁸⁶ Because the interviews have been made in Spanish, I translated to English only the parts that I cite in this dissertation. During the interviews I took some notes of the verbal and the nonverbal language that might be complementary for understanding the content of the recorded answers. Any oral interview is a subjective process in which the interviewer inevitable

⁸⁴ Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 114-15.

⁸⁵ I have been specially trained in oral history techniques in one of my PhD courses: COMMRC 2040 “Voices of Remembrance: Oral History Method, Theory, and Interpretation.” My oral history research is excluded from the University of Pittsburgh IRB oversight.

⁸⁶ Yow, Valerie Raleigh, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira, 2005).

is interpreting the answers through his/her own frame of reference. In order to reduce the biases, I always tried to create a climate of respect and sensitivity towards my interviewee. I used articles related to oral history methodology to complement Yow's guide.⁸⁷ Even though I made 16 oral history interviews since I started my research in 2008, for the purpose of this dissertation I have used only the ones that were more related to the content of Arguedas' letters.

I have divided this dissertation in two parts. The first part focuses on how Arguedas constructs an image of himself through his letters. This part has three chapters: Chapter One explores his childhood' memories, Chapter Two analyzes how Arguedas embodied his nation, and Chapter Three analyzes the portrayal of his authorial self. The second part of the dissertation focuses on the analysis of how Arguedas describes his world. This part has two Chapters: Chapter Four analyzes the relation he had with people who surrounded him, and Chapter Five describes the relation with his environment. This final chapter focuses in two main aspects: the relation he had with different countries in his condition of migrant, and the synesthetic communication present in his letters through his relation with nature and music. Affective language present in his letters is a key element to interwoven the different sections, while attempting to find the different communicational strategies that allowed Arguedas to construct his voice. In the conclusions, I will summarize the main findings of this dissertation as well as to mention what further work needs to be done in the future.

⁸⁷ Paula Hamilton, "The Oral Historian as Memorist," *Oral History Review* 32.1 (Winter Spring 2005): 11-18; Neal Norrick, "Talking About Remembering and Forgetfulness in Oral History Interviews," *Oral History Review* 32.2 (Summer /Fall 2005): 1-20; Katherine Martin and Charles Martin, "Transcription Style: Choices and Variables at the Appalachian Oral History Project," *International Journal of Oral History* 6.2 (1985): 126-28; Carl Wilmser, "For the Record: Editing and the Production of Meaning in Oral History," *Oral History Review* 28.1 (Winter/Spring 2001): 65-85.

2.0 PART I: CONSTRUCTION OF SELF

The “private” Arguedas constructs different facets of his complex self-representation in the vast corpus of letters exchanged with family members, people in the contemporary cultural scene, and people close to his affections. Although he did not intend the letters, taken as a whole, to comprise a retrospective narrative that would give meaning to his life, these texts can be analyzed as “self-portraits” of the author. As Michel Beaujour points out, the word “self-portrait” is not precise for referring to a text because “it evokes Rembrandt, Van Gogh, and Francis Bacon rather than Montaigne or Michel Leiris. In a literary context, self-portraitists often write that they ‘paint themselves,’ this metaphor cannot be spun out indefinitely into a description of their texts.”¹ However, using “self-portrait” as a genre “attempts to create coherence through a system of cross-references, superimpositions, or correspondences among homologous and substitutable elements, in such a way as to give the appearance of discontinuity, of anachronistic juxtaposition, or montage, as opposed to the syntagmatics of a narration....The operational formula for the self-portrait therefore is: ‘I won’t tell you what I’ve done, but I shall tell you who I am.’”² Using this metaphor, we can say that through his letters Arguedas is telling us who he is with an intense language, which is flooded with emotions.

¹ Michel Beaujour, *Poetics of the Literary Self-Portrait* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 1.

² Ibid., 3.

We may prefer, then, to use “self-fashioning” instead of self-portraiture, as a better way to describe self-representation. In his book, *Renaissance Self Fashioning*, Stephen Greenblatt understands self-fashioning as “the cultural system of meaning that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment.”³ According to Greenblatt, “Literature functions within this system in three interlocking ways: as a manifestation of the concrete behavior of its particular author, as itself the expression of the codes by which behavior is shaped, and as a reflection upon those codes.”⁴ The epistolary genre is not precisely creative literature; however, in the case of a literary writer like Arguedas the boundaries are blurred. His letters and diaries are often self-consciously “literary”; therefore, we can apply Greenblatt’s criteria to identify the way in which Arguedas manifests his particular self through literary codes. Considering the importance of historical context in the Arguedas case, I analyze in this chapter how he fashions a character of himself through his letters.

Another approach to self-construction is brought out by Walter Mignolo, who highlights the fact that subaltern cultures assimilate modernity through a process of contrasting foreign cultural codes with their own traditions, because “tradition did not have its own discourse. It was created by the discourse that defined modernity.”⁵ In the process of being between two cultures, not only a new identity but also a new rationality is created. This new rationality is what Mignolo denominates as “border thinking,”⁶ “which is by definition beyond the national discourses of

³ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 3.

⁴ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning*, 4.

⁵ Walter Mignolo, “The Enduring Enchantment: (Or the Epistemic Privilege of Modernity and Where to Go from Here),” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 933.

⁶ The concept of “border thinking” is directly related to the concepts of “border gnosis” (knowledge generated in the cultural borders) and “pluriversality” (against any universalistic standpoint) developed also by Mignolo; and it is indirectly related to Enrique Dussel’s concept of “transmodernity” (see, for example, his “World System and Trans-Modernity,” *Nepantla: Views from the South* 3, no. 2 [2002]: 21-44), which allows the possibility of a non-eurocentric dialogue with alterity. The “border thinking” idea implies thinking from a “paradigma otro” (Walter D.

bounding territorial states.”⁷ Therefore, Arguedas through his letters creates an historical embodiment of himself, but he also exemplifies a case of “border thinking,” due to the fact that he belonged to two cultures. Acknowledging his personal, social, and historical position in life, he elaborates a construction of himself and a particular world vision embedded in a historical context. This subaltern study of Walter Mignolo’s could be helpful in interpreting Arguedas’ self-construction through letter writing. Mignolo’s concept of “border thinking” goes beyond the distinction between cognoscenti subject and cognoscible object. The concept is useful for understanding the cultural interactions that occur with migration processes because it implies that the cognoscenti subject itself, not only the object (culture), is hybridized.⁸ According to Mignolo, the concept of “border thinking” creates a space for a new logic of knowledge and expression. Using this concept, the cue to approaching Arguedas’ letters would be in seeing him as a “border thinker.” Arguedas tried to understand cultural interactions produced by migration while being himself the result of those interactions. He proposed with his life as much as with his written work a new logic for grasping the nature of Peruvian society. Therefore, the concept of border thinking could allow us to glimpse Arguedas’ construction of himself in all its complexity.

José Maria Arguedas’ suicide in 1969 at age fifty-eight has been used by some intellectuals as an indicator of the impossibility of negotiation between Andean culture and Western capitalism. However, we should be careful in relating Arguedas’ suicide directly and only to social causes. His suicide has been the object of several speculations. He had a very sensitive personality, intense headaches, and difficulty in sleeping. It was probably the combination of social

Mignolo, “‘Un Paradigma Otro’: Colonialidad Global, Pensamiento Fronterizo y Cosmopolitanismo Crítico,” *Dispositio* 25, no. 52 [2005]: 127-46), it means leaving aside any paradigm to generate a new form of knowledge.

⁷ Walter Mignolo, “The Enduring Enchantment,” 936.

⁸ Walter D. Mignolo, *Historias Locales/Diseños Globales: Colonialidad, Conocimientos Subalternos y Pensamiento Fronterizo* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 2003), 77-78.

circumstances and his traumatic early experiences (his mother's death, frequent absence of his father, bad relations with his stepfamily) that triggered a biological predisposition to depression, which, in turn, shaped his particular style of writing.⁹ We should admit, though, as we are going to see in some Arguedas' letter excerpts that he considered himself a representation of the cultural mixture in Peruvian society; which made him to feel responsibility for telling, through his own life and writings, hidden sides of Peruvian history. Arguedas' resulting construction of himself as an embodiment of the nation has its roots in his childhood memories and is also reflected through his authorial self. For this reason in Part I of this dissertation, I will analyze how Arguedas constructs his persona in his letters through different perspectives, to each of which I devote a chapter: by summoning memories from his childhood, as an embodiment of the nation, and as a projection of an authorial self.

As we will see, by constructing his persona in these areas in his letters, he reveals his communication strategy of presenting himself as a bridge between cultures of the Peruvian Andes and the Westernized coast. Thus, the letters are sites of rhetorical invention, where Arguedas produces a unique rhetoric to portray himself in this bridging manner.¹⁰ This rhetoric of constructing himself implies both his capacity and propensity to build communication bridges through his letters. These communication bridges are not only to connect people (Andean and coastal) but also to connect the texts among themselves (letters with literary work).

⁹ Santiago Stucchi, "La Depresión de José María Arguedas," *Revista de Neuro-Psiquiatría* 66, no. 3 (Sept. 2003): 171-84.

¹⁰ "Rather than continuing to form an interchangeable terministic trio with 'discovery' and 'creation,' 'invention' has been redefined by many scholars to signify a uniquely rhetorical perspective on composing that subsumes both objectivistic and subjectivistic conceptions." Richard E. Young and Yameng Liu, ed., *Landmark Essays on Rhetorical Invention in Writing* (Davis, Calif.: Hermagoras Press, 1994), xiii.

2.1 CHAPTER 1: MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD

An important aspect to take into consideration in Arguedas' construction of himself is his use of memory. In one of the few recent articles about the epistolary production of Arguedas, Cecilia Esparza asserts that "childhood constitutes a powerful semantic core in the literary, autobiographical, and anthropological work of Arguedas"¹¹ –a semantic core that needs more interpretation from scholars dedicated to him. As we are going to see, childhood memories are one of the recurrent topics in Arguedas' letters. He portrays his childhood with ambiguity between happiness and suffering and as embedded in a particular Andean cultural context. His letters show us one of the facets of his life: the child Arguedas protected by indigenous people. For example, in one of his last letters to his brother in 1969, he says:

When Nelly caresses me I feel like a child; as when in the house of Doña Grimanesa I laid down to sleep in Doña Cayetana's lap or looked up to José Delgado and don Felipe Maywa or Victor Pusa as kinds of mysteriously protective trees.¹²

Nelly was Arguedas' sister and Doña Cayetana was the Andean cook of Doña Grimanesa, Arguedas' stepmother. José Delgado, Felipe Maywa and Victor Pusa were indigenous men who also worked for his stepmother. Arguedas had a special affection for Doña Cayetana and Felipe Maywa, who gave him the tenderness and protection he lacked during his childhood. He mentioned them several times in his letters and diaries, always in a positive way, as if his memories of them

¹¹ "La niñez constituye en la obra literaria, autobiográfica y antropológica de Arguedas un potente núcleo semántico." Cecilia Esparza, "Un Niño con Ojos y Oídos de Adulto: Autorrepresentación en la obra epistolar de José María Arguedas," in *Arguedas: La Dinámica de los Encuentros Culturales* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2013), 70.

¹² "Cuando Nelly me hace cariño me siento como un niño; como cuando en la casa de doña Grimanesa me echaba a dormir en el regazo de doña Cayetana o contemplaba a José Delgado y a don Felipe Mayhua o a Victor Pusa como a una especie de árboles misteriosamente protectores." José María Arguedas, Santiago, Chile, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, May 12, 1969, in Carmen Maria Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia: Cartas de José María Arguedas a Arístides y Nelly Arguedas, a Rosa Pozo Navarro y Yolanda López Pozo* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 1999), 281.

were his only safe port in the middle of a challenging life. It is interesting to see the metaphor he uses “mysteriously protective trees” to describe his indigenous friends and protectors. It is not unusual for Arguedas to introduce words referring to nature, such as trees, rivers, birds, etc., when he wanted to express an overflowing emotion that goes beyond the rational. It was probably his close relation with nature learned through his connection with Andean people what gave him this capacity of introducing nature as part of his everyday language. The comparison he makes between these indigenous men is not a comparison with any kind of trees. Indeed, these trees have some attributes: they are “mysterious” and “protective.” He transfers some human qualities from the indigenous men to the trees or vice versa. This may be one of clues to understanding Arguedas’ rationality. On the one hand, he seems to be an observer separated from the indigenous people and not being part of them, but, on the other hand, the language he uses to describe them integrates him with them, nature being the bond of union. In this excerpt, it is also important to highlight that one affectionate experience in adulthood (his sister’s tenderness) triggers Arguedas’ memories of his childhood, a time when he received affection from the indigenous servants around him. His memories of childhood are very intense and presented in his letters as determinant of his later world view, especially in the moments of despair, when childhood memories offered a peaceful place to find a refuge for his anguished mind. The excerpt above belongs to a letter written from Santiago, Chile, where Arguedas was trying to recover from his mental illness while finishing his last novel.

Since Freud there have been different theoretical approaches to memory, but Freudian influence upon them remains. Freud considered childhood memories as “screen memories” concluding that they are not real childhood memories because childhood events are selected for

their appropriateness. They can be distorted or even fantasized.¹³ Freud stated that “our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at later periods when the memories were aroused.”¹⁴ Therefore, Freud’s theory of screen memories marked childhood memories with unreliability. So, to what extent can we trust Arguedas’ memories, which continuously emphasize, on the one hand, the abandonment and suffering of his childhood and, on the other, an enthusiastic appreciation of the Andean world during his early years? Besides, we should take into consideration that in the case of Arguedas’ letters, the “screen memories” have also passed through a process of rationality implied by the medium used to convey them (writing) and by the fact he was communicating with a person in distance. These factors may have added other variables in the process of selecting these “screen memories” to cause certain effects in his addressees.

Here is an example of how Arguedas’ expression of childhood memories portrays his feelings of being an orphan and the way he approached the Andean world during his early years:

You know how our life has been, how for reasons, some of them clear, my stay in San Juan when I was really a child while you were in Puquio with papa, because of my childishness and strong feelings of being an orphan, [while] you were a strong personality, I moved closer to the Indian¹⁵ men and women and learned from them all or almost all about their wonderful and nearly indescribable world. I sing like them, talk like them, but at the same time I was aware, from Puquio onwards in every town where I was with the old man and in Lima, of the other people. My works are the flower of that life, and that of Viseca, where although barefoot we were never unhappy, but quite the contrary.¹⁶

¹³ Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory. Childhood Recollection and its Objects in Literary Modernism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 27.

¹⁴ Madelon Sprengnether, “Freud as Memoirist: A Reading of “Screen Memories,” *American Imago* 69, no. 2 (Summer 2012): 215-39, 227. For an example of the application of the concept to authorial autobiography, see Diane Long Hoeveler, “Screen Memories and Fictionalized Autobiography: Mary Shelley’s *Mathilda* and “The Mourner,” in *Romantic Autobiography in England*, ed. Eugene Stelzig (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2009), 79-95.

¹⁵ Arguedas uses the word “Indios” and I will keep it in the translations of his letters to respect his language, which is more accurate reflection of his time. However, in my analysis I will use the word “indigenous”—a more contemporary word—which does not have the pejorative connotation that “indios” has in current days.

¹⁶ “Tú sabes cómo ha sido nuestra vida, cómo por causas, algunas claras, mi permanencia en San Juan cuando era muy niño mientras tú estabas en Puquio con papá, por mi infantilismo y sentimiento de gran orfandad, tú eras fuerte

After Arguedas' mother passed away, his father married by second time and all the new family went to live to Puquio (a small town in Apurimac, Peru), where the father worked as a judge, but, later on, Arguedas' father decided to stay in Puquio only with Arguedas' older brother, Aristides and sent Arguedas to San Juan (to a farm of Arguedas' stepmother, Dona Grimanesa). He lived there with his stepmother and stepbrothers. At that time Arguedas was around five years old. His life in the farm at San Juan gave him the opportunity to live among indigenous people and, as he states in the excerpt cited, to learn about their world view. However, it was also a difficult time for the punishments he received from his stepbrother who was twelve years older than him. His father, being the only judge in the region not only worked in Puquio but traveled constantly around different towns. This situation emphasized Arguedas' feeling of orphanhood, which probably prevailed until his adulthood, with the detrimental long-term effect that as an adult he could not recapture the affection he received from indigenous people during his childhood. He stayed in San Juan until he was ten years old, when decided to escape from the abuses of his stepbrother and went with his older brother Aristides to Viseca, a farm of their uncle Jose Manuel Perea Arellano. He stayed in there for two years and it was one of his happiest times during childhood. On his uncle's farm, indigenous villagers were not servants as they were in the farm of his stepmother.¹⁷

de carácter, yo me arrimé a los indios e indias y aprendí de ellos todo o casi todo su maravilloso y casi indescriptible mundo. Yo canto como ellos, como ellos hablo, pero al mismo tiempo también sentí, desde Puquio hasta en todos los pueblos en que estuve con el viejo y en Lima, a la otra gente. Mis trabajos son la flor de esa vida, y de la de Viseca, donde aunque descalzos nunca fuimos infelices sino todo lo contrario.” José María Arguedas, Valparaíso, Chile, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, August, 18 1969, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 285.

¹⁷ All the biographical information of Arguedas life has been taken from a report Carmen Pinilla, specialist in Arguedas, submitted to the “Comisión Nacional por el Centenario del Natalicio de José María Arguedas del Ministerio de Educación” [National Commission for the Centennial of Jose Maria Arguedas of the Education Ministry] in 2010. http://www.congreso.gob.pe/comisiones/2010/CE_JMArguedas/biografia.pdf

Analyzing more in depth the language used by Arguedas in the quote cited above, we can see that first it is important to highlight the use of “our life” when writing to his brother and referring to their childhood. In this way he creates a bond of identification with his brother, even though they did not share all the experiences. A Burkean reading of the text would suggest that Arguedas uses “our” to affirm consubstantiality with his brother.¹⁸ However, he also differentiates him from his brother who was apart with the father. Arguedas situates himself on the side of the indigenous people who offered protection to him.

Nevertheless, despite his feeling of orphanhood, Arguedas kept into his adulthood very positive memories of the local Andean culture that nurtured him, and where he imbibed a different type of learning, one that allowed him to detect the subtleties of nature.¹⁹ In the excerpt he states that he “sings like them and talks like them.” Even though there is a risk of over-naturalizing the Indigene at the expense of culture because, as Keith Lindner and George Stetson point out “the essentializations of nature-arguments, long deployed by colonial and postcolonial regimes, still function as enactments of power”²⁰ it is also true that Andean people are in fact closer to oral mythology, synesthetic communication, and nature. Linder and Stetson’s argument citing Bruce Braun states that: “tying indigeneity to nature can have the effect of erasing [indigenous] people altogether, or merely collapsing them into the category of nature itself”;²¹ however, denying the

¹⁸ Kenneth Burke points out that “In being identified with B, A is ‘substantially one’ with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distinct substance and consubstantial with another.” Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 21.

¹⁹ To understand the creation process of indigenous knowledge—in which the world view is in direct relation with the experience with nature— see George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, ed., *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of our World* (Toronto: OISE/UT and University of Toronto Press, 2000).

²⁰ Keith Lindner and George Stetson, “For Opacity: Nature, Difference and Indigeneity in Amazonia,” *Topia: The Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 21 (Spring 2009): 41-61, (quote on 43). Bruce Braun, *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada’s West Coast* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 42.

relationship indigenous people have developed with nature would be an oversimplification and underestimation of their culture. Precisely, the viewpoint of Arguedas is that he had an early and profound experience with indigenous people, which allowed him to experience the world as much closer to nature. For example, in the quote above, he says: “my works are the flower of that life, and that of Viseca, where although barefoot we were never unhappy, but quite the contrary.” The use of the word “flower” as many others words related to nature along his letters, show how familiar he felt with nature. This is, of course, his testimony, but we should also take into account that in Arguedas’ time, he was an exception. However, today there are several cases of Peruvian intellectuals with indigenous origins who are able to have a better understanding of what Arguedas was proposing at his time and give a similar testimony of the way they themselves are closer to nature and myths.²²

The intensity of Arguedas’ language is nuanced by the use of litotes via double negation: “never unhappy but quite the contrary” and by his doubts about his learning from indigenous people: “learned from them all or almost all about their wonderful and nearly indescribable world,” which shows his awareness that he was sharing experiences in a world that was not totally his, even though he felt he belonged to it. Clifford Geertz asserts that “to see ourselves as others see us can be eye-opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the

²² On May 22, 2014, I attended a conference about Peruvian Amazon Literature at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, where Dina Ananco, a Shipibo-Wampis poet, who earned a B.A. in Literature at the National University of San Marcos, participated. She said that she had to adapt to living in Lima but now feels comfortable speaking both in her mother tongue and in Spanish. However, she has long kept inside herself the cosmovision she learned from childhood, which includes believing in mythological beings who live in the jungle river.

largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self-congratulation and tolerance a sham, comes.”²³

If Arguedas’ childhood memories cited above were true, then Geertz’s assertion would fit perfectly in interpreting how Arguedas, among indigenous people, felt like one of them and, to his own mind, he was able to see the world as they did.

Finally, in the excerpt of the letter cited above, Arguedas says that after he left Puquio, the small town of his childhood, and traveled to other Peruvian cities near Lima, the capital, he was able to meet “the other [i.e. nonindigenous] people.” By calling the nonindigenous “the other people,” he reverses the usual othering that Johannes Fabian considers in his book;²⁴ therefore, we could ask where did he really belong? Perhaps he belonged where he poured out his affections. Thus, in his epistolary discourse Arguedas seems to value more the indigenous world and to prefer belonging to that world. He may be also using it as an identity marker to distinguish himself from Euro-Peruvians and shift the blame for his mental malaise to that world, and his salvation from it to the indigenous one. In any case, in his childhood memories, as we are seeing, he identifies with the Andean world and does not accept his position as an outsider. He feels like one of them; nevertheless, not being indigenous he always occupied a privileged position “in between,” which gave him the possibility of understanding both worlds, which later on he portrayed in his literary work. Arguedas, then, is proposing a new use of “otherness,” one that refers more to the emotional distance from a culture than to the fact of belonging or not to that culture. The “other” is for Arguedas the one who is not emotionally connected to him, the one who sees the world differently from him, in this case, the nonindigenous.

²³ On the weakening nuance of litotes, see Ton van der Wouden, “Litotes and Downward Monotonicity,” in *Negation: A Notion in Focus*, ed. Heinrich Wansing (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1996), 150. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), 16.

²⁴ Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

Another concept that could be useful in understanding Arguedas' early identification with Andean culture is the concept of critical ontology, which implies "the process of reconnecting human beings on a variety of levels and in numerous ways to a living social and physical web of reality to a living cosmos."²⁵ This concept developed by Joe L. Kincheloe fits better with non-western cultures, such as Andean culture. Therefore, an explanation of this new understanding of "otherness" would be that living among indigenous peoples, Arguedas learned a critical ontology, a new way of thinking differently from rational, Cartesian, western thinking.

As I said before, Arguedas' memories of childhood expressed not only his connection with Andean culture, but also his traumatic experiences during that period. This ambivalence in Arguedas' early memories is recurrent in his letters. Portraying himself as an orphan who experienced traumatic experiences may be a way of asking for sympathy and understanding from the reader. In a letter written to his friend Alejandro Ortiz in 1967, one year after his first suicide attempt, Arguedas emphasizes strong negative feelings during childhood produced by experiences that are not explicitly mentioned in this letter, but that we may relate to the bad treatment he received from his stepmother and stepbrother (he told about those experiences in a later testimony).²⁶ Again his ambivalence is shown:

I have serious conflicts since childhood. They were never resolved, they culminated in a suicide attempt that was thwarted, but the conflicts were not resolved. You were, in your own home, witness to the fierce internal fight that I released before taking those pills. I can't be sure what's going to happen next. And it's nobody's fault but [that of] the circumstances in which I spent my childhood. It strengthened me a lot for a few days to know so unequivocally that something very promising has remained in you, very beautiful,

²⁵ Joe L. Kincheloe, "Postformalism and Critical Ontology—Part 1: Difference, Indigenous Knowledge, and Cognition," in *The Praeger Handbook of Education and Psychology*, vol. 4, ed. Joe L. Kincheloe and Raymond A. Horn, Jr. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2007), 884-91(886).

²⁶ *Primer Encuentro de Narradores Peruanos, Arequipa, 1965* (Lima, Casa de la Cultura, 1969).

happiness as a source of work, this excellent state has remained or has been aroused in you in part as a result of your friendship with me.²⁷

The suicide attempt to which Arguedas referred in this excerpt, even if not explicit (“You were, in your own home, witness to the fierce internal fight that I released before taking those pills”), occurred in April 1966. He was found almost dead in his office at the National Museum of History. He had taken 37 Seconal pills, a barbiturate.²⁸ The “conflicts” he mentions here probably refer to the traumatic experiences he had when his stepbrother forced Arguedas to be witness of his violent sexual intercoursés when he raped women that were neighbors and mothers of Arguedas’ friends. This fact, mentioned by Arguedas on several occasions, marked his young psyche negatively for the rest of his life.²⁹ He was between six and nine years old at that time. These traumatic experiences during his childhood probably were another factor that fomented his anguish, which along others led to his suicide. But not everything is negative in this excerpt. The ambivalence between negative and positive feelings remains. Here he also portrays himself as a person able to convey happiness and appreciation of beauty to a friend. This positive feeling seems to comfort him: “it strengthened me a lot to know....” Considering that he attempted suicide just a year before he wrote this letter, it was probably encouraging for him to see that he could be useful

²⁷ “Tengo conflictos graves desde la infancia. No fueron nunca resueltos, desembocaron en un suicidio que se frustró, pero los conflictos no se resolvieron. Fuiste, en tu propia casa, testigo de la feroz pelea interna que liberé antes de tomar esas píldoras. No puedo estar seguro qué va a pasar después. Y nadie tiene la culpa sino las circunstancias en que pasé mi infancia. Me fortaleció mucho por unos días el saber de manera tan inequívoca que en ti ha quedado algo muy prometedor, muy bello, la felicidad como fuente de trabajo, ha quedado o se ha suscitado en ti ese estado excelente en parte como resultado de tu amistad conmigo.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, Paris, France, December 2, 1967, in Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas, Recuerdos de una Amistad* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 242.

²⁸ See letter of José María Arguedas, to his brother Arístides, April 10, 1966, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 268.

José María Arguedas, Valparaíso, Chile, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, August 18, 1969, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 285.

²⁹ *Primer Encuentro de Narradores Peruanos, Arequipa, 1965.*

in mentoring his young friend. Rhetorically, he transformed the tragedy of the suicide into an incentive for the young man toward creative production.

This ambivalent portrayal of childhood memories is repeated in other letters, such as the following 1965 one he wrote to his colleague, the American anthropologist, John Murra:³⁰

I've suffered in these last two months an acute crisis of my nervous illness that comes from a long time ago. I had a barbaric childhood and adolescence, oscillating between the infinite tenderness of people who suffered (the Quechua servants of my stepmother) who protected me, my father's tenderness very much or somewhat controlled by his old concept of parental authority and the brutality of my stepbrother and stepmother, especially my stepbrother who was truly a selfish and malicious monster. He dominated the villagers and punished them for pleasure. But nowhere during my childhood did I find true protection to harmoniously prepare me for the dazzling and terrible awakening to the world, and during my teens I was alone.³¹

On the one hand, here Arguedas again stresses his suffering during childhood and, on the other hand, the tenderness and wisdom he received from Andean people and from his father, his main reference as an example to follow. However, the absence of his father was almost permanent; being an itinerant judge who frequently traveled from town to town, Arguedas' father could not

³⁰ John Victor Murra was born at Isak Lipschitz in 1916, in Odessa, Ukraine. He grew up in Bucharest, Romania and died in his home on October 16, 2006, at the age of 90. He studied social sciences at Chicago University. During 1942-43, Murra worked with John Dollard and Ruth Benedict interviewing Abraham Lincoln Brigade veterans for a project involving soldiers' reactions to battlefield conditions. The results were published in 1943 under the title, *ITAL Fear in Battle*. In 1946 he was turned down for U.S. citizenship on the ground that he had fought with the Spanish Republican Army. He defended his dissertation, "The Economic Organization of the Inca State, in 1955." He was noted for his contributions in historical anthropology and particularly in Andean studies. After he retired in 1982, Murra remained active in international professional societies. He served as President of the American Society for Ethnohistory (1970-71), the American Ethnological Society (1972-73), and the Institute for Andean Research (1977-83). Information taken from *Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives*: <http://www.alba-valb.org/volunteers/john-victor-murra/>

³¹ "He padecido en estos dos últimos meses una aguda crisis de mi dolencia nerviosa que viene de antiguo. Tuve una niñez y una adolescencia bárbaras, oscilando entre la ternura infinita de gente que sufría (los sirvientes quechuas de mi madrastra) que me protegieron, la ternura de mi padre muy o algo controlada por su antiguo concepto de la autoridad paternal y la brutalidad de un hermanastro y una madrastra, especialmente mi hermanastro que era un verdadero monstruo de egoísmo y maldad. Dominaba al pueblo y lo castigaba por placer. Pero en ninguna parte encontré durante la infancia la protección verdadera para recibir armoniosamente el despertar deslumbrante y terrible ante el mundo, y en mi adolescencia estuve solo." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Jo-hn Murra, [Poughkeepsie, New York] United States, November 12, 1961, in *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, John V. Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, eds. (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 1998), 64.

supply Arguedas' need for affection. Therefore, when he was a child he clearly felt protected by indigenous people; nevertheless, this protection was not enough to lead him to a harmonious awakening into the Western world. It seems that the strong sufferings, produced mainly by his stepbrother, were difficult to erase from his memories, to the point that he uses the adjective "barbaric" to describe his childhood. Fortunately, Andean people were there to protect him, but not to offer enough security to confront future challenges in adult life. In the midst of his being an orphan, Arguedas was able to have a better understanding of the suffering of these people. We should highlight here that using the word "barbaric" can be considered a rhetorical move to reverse "the other." After all, during XVIII century –in colonial times—there was a painting known as "Pintura de Castas" [Casta Painting] which portrayed the different mixtures of races in the Viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru. Some of these paintings represented the indigenous as "Indios Bárbaros" [Barbaric Indians].³²

Leaving childhood implied for Arguedas becoming even lonelier causing in him dissociation from Western world. We can see that at the end of the quote where he says: "during my teens I was alone" (Arguedas moved to study in Ica, a coastal city when he was a teenager and he could have felt rejection from other students for being *serrano*—from highlands). During childhood, he at least had the company and protection of the Andean people who surrounded him, who also suffered even though in a different way. His stepbrother was a brutal landlord who treated indigenous people unfairly, much as he had mistreated Arguedas as a child creating an identification of him and the Indigene via the shared suffering. In any case, Arguedas was also comforted by the suffering of the people he was closest to. As an adult he became more conscious

³² Anne Ebert, "La Representación de las Américas Coloniales en los Cuadros de Castas," *Scientia X*, 10. <http://www.urp.edu.pe/urp/modules/centros/centroinvestigacion/humanidades/anneebert.pdf>

of the social injustice perpetrated against indigenous people that he had witnessed as a child. Seeing the behavior of his stepbrother, Arguedas—probably not being conscious of that—was also seeing the reenactment of colonization, which empowered landlords to oppress indigenous people. Murra, having participated in the Spanish Civil War against fascism, could have been empathetic towards what Arguedas told him about indigenous people being oppressed.

During Arguedas' adulthood there was no one to comfort him, and, as he says in a 1962 letter written to Pedro Lastra, a Chilean editor and Arguedas' friend, this social injustice discouraged him to the point of feeling biologically sick:

Peru is such a beautiful country, as profound as it is cruel in these times. This barbaric struggle stimulated me before, it inspired me; but after some very tough psychic problems I couldn't overcome, I began feeling depressed and what before motivated me, today discourages me. Not in the sense of making me lose faith but biologically. The appalling childhood and adolescence that I had created in me certain disturbing beginnings that developed when my vitality was sharply diminished by serious personal problems.³³

Even though it happened more than forty years since, the author has been witness of the cruel treatment indigenous people received in the farms when he was a child, injustice and oppression against villagers continued in the 1960s in Perú. In that decade, however, indigenous people started to rebel in some provinces of the country. The most famous was in La Convencion, Cuzco, leaded by the Trotskyist Hugo Blanco in 1962, but he was sent to jail and later on he was exiled to México during the military government of Velasco Alvarado. This government, in 1969, finally established the Agrarian Reform, allowing indigenous villagers to be owners of their lands.

³³ "El Perú es país tan bello, tan profundo como cruel, en estos tiempos. Esta lucha bárbara me estimulaba antes, me inspiraba: pero luego de unos problemas psíquicos muy duros que no pude vencer, empecé a deprimirme y lo que antes me impulsaba hoy me desalienta. No en el sentido de hacerme perder la fe sino biológicamente. La atroz niñez y adolescencia que tuve crearon en mí ciertos principios perturbadores que se desarrollaron cuando mi vitalidad fue fuertemente abatida por graves problemas personales." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pedro Lastra, Santiago, Chile, February 8, 1962, in Edgar O'Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra* (Santiago de Chile: Lom Ediciones, 1997), 16.

By the time Arguedas wrote this letter, in February of 1962, the rebellion of La Convención has not happened yet and the injustice suffered by indigenous people overwhelmed him, finding relief when traveled to Chile. Even though it is not shown in this excerpt, but in the same letter, Arguedas tells Pedro Lastra that what he liked about staying in Chile is that in this country he does not see the resentment that haunts people and the repulse of the aristocratic and wealthy classes towards the Indians. In an oral history interview I conducted with Pedro Lastra,³⁴ he told me that Arguedas had idealized Chile, probably because there he found the support of his psychoanalyst and of a group of friends who shared his ideals, constituting an island of affection for Arguedas, far away from Peruvian reality. We should mention though, that in Chile, indigenous people who live mainly in the north side of this country (Mapuches) have been always mistreated until today. It is understandable, though, that the Peruvian writer was more familiar with the social reality of his own country. In any case, Chile offered a refugee where he could recover from his mental illness and write. He is not explicit about the problems that developed from the disturbing beginnings of his childhood, but we can assume he refers to his psychological malady.

It is interesting to notice the way he describes Peru in this quote, as beautiful and cruel at the same time. The contradictory experiences of his childhood prevented a “harmonious awakening to the world,” as he suggested above, and marked not only his understanding of Peru but of himself. Arguedas portrays himself –as he does with his own country – riddled with ambiguities and contradictions.

Arguedas also shows ambivalence expressing his memories when considering his adverse childhood circumstances as offering him an opportunity to approach Andean people, as he describes them in a letter to John Murra:

³⁴ Pedro Lastra, oral interview by author, Lima, April 25, 2014.

I'm happy with my work. I love my country, I admire it, I have an unlimited faith in it, and I had the miraculous opportunity that during my childhood my stepmother threw me to live in the kitchen with the Indian laborers and servants. They founded the inextinguishable tenderness with which I see the world.³⁵

Following Kenneth Burke, who considers “the use of language as an act of naming: a speaker identifies aspects of experience through language,”³⁶ we could say that in this letter, Arguedas, transforms childhood abuse into “opportunity”—suggesting he was presented with choice, when he really was not.

The fond memories from his childhood could be triggered at any time that he felt comfortable in a similar atmosphere to the one he experienced in childhood. In the next letter excerpt written to John Murra, we can see that having had the opportunity of growing up in an Andean region, these good feelings were bound to show up again and again in Arguedas, making him more productive, even though, in the end, his enthusiasm decayed:

I am pleased I have treat you, albeit briefly, and I have heard you during the Seminar. It constitutes a guiding and strengthening memory, especially during these months that I was overwhelmed by anxiety and lack of energy. But as you well know, human psychology has its mysteries, fortunately still unpredictable. In Huánuco I again felt the atmosphere of my childhood and my adolescence and wrote those 220 pages in four weeks. Now I'm not sure they're so good. During the first correction of the original typed document, I thought they were excellent.³⁷

³⁵“Estoy contento de mi trabajo. Amo a mi país, lo admiro, tengo una fe ilimitada en él, y tuve la milagrosa oportunidad de que en mi niñez mi madrastra me arrojara a vivir en la cocina con los peones y sirvientas indias. Ellos fundaron inextinguiblemente la ternura con que veo el mundo.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra, [Poughkeepsie, New York], September 28, 1960, in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 46.

³⁶ Gregory Hansen, “Kenneth Burke’s Rhetorical Theory within the Construction of the Ethnography of Speaking,” *Folklore Forum* 27, 1 (1996): 50-59 (quote on 52).

³⁷ “Me felicito de haberlo tratado, aunque brevemente, y de haberlo escuchado durante el Seminario. Constituye un recuerdo orientador y fortalecedor, especialmente durante estos meses en que estuve abrumado por la angustia y la falta de energías. Pero como Ud. bien sabe, la psicología humana tiene sus misterios, felizmente todavía imprevisibles. En Huánuco volvía a sentirme en el ambiente de mi niñez y de mi adolescencia y escribí esas 220 páginas en cuatro semanas. Ahora ya no estoy seguro de que sean tan buenas. Durante la primera corrección de los originales ya copiados a máquina me pareció que eran hasta excelentes.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John

As we can see, Arguedas related childhood not only with the opportunity he had to know Andean culture in his life but also with a time of happiness. As an adult, it was enough to travel to a place in the mountains (in this case Huánuco) to reconnect again with those tender memories and feel the necessary energy to be able to work enthusiastically, even though his perfectionism or perhaps his insecurity about the quality of his work prevailed until the end. It may seem confusing that in this excerpt he refers to his adolescence as a time of fond memories when in other excerpts he refers to it as a lonely time; however, we should mention that similar to his recollections of childhood, Arguedas had remembered experiences when he was an adolescent because, during his school vacations, he could travel again to his uncle's farm. This was a place where he could wander freely around the farm and read the books of his uncle, *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo, among them. It is not surprising, though, that he includes detailed explanations to his friend his friends about his progress in writing his novel (*El Sexto*). Arguedas used to tell almost all his friends and family members about his novels because they were an important side of his life. As we are going to see later in Chapter Three, he portrays an authorial self throughout his letters.

It was also during his childhood that Arguedas felt, for the first time, his “in betweenness,” where he felt uncertainty and perplexity about the unfairness of Peruvian society.

In a letter to Enrique Congrains, a young writer and disciple, he says:

I was a very sensitive child and teenager, to the point that I haven't ceased to be either one or the other. I wrote because I wanted to bear witness to the world that I so intensely knew: an unjust world of atrocious cruelty. As I grew up between semi-enslaved Indian servants and had the fortune to alternate with partially free but strong peasants, the nature of those people whom I loved and love with all my strength, because they also loved me so, the

Murra, [Poughkeepsie, New York], November 21, 1960, in Murra and López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 49.

nature of those people formed me and I'm now incapable of understanding well and less capable of conceiving certain subtleties.³⁸

There are important elements to highlight in this quote. First, Arguedas portrays himself as an adult with the spirit of a child or teenager ("I haven't ceased to be either one or the other"); second, he describes himself as a sensitive child who was aware of the social injustice suffered by indigenous people, some of them "semi-enslaved" and servants, others partially free peasants; and third, his experiences with these suffering people is what made him unable to "conceive certain subtleties." He does not say exactly what he refers by "subtleties," but gives an example saying that he was unable to understand "Ulysses," Joyce's novel. It is not the only time that Arguedas rejects what seems to be too much sophistication or abstraction for him, because his main reference point for understanding all the subtleties of reality and literature is just experience. For this reason, in other moments, he is proud of having overcome the challenges to understand the subtleties in the complexity of Peruvian society and also the subtleties in understanding the world and the connection we have with all beings. In his last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, this connection is expressed in all its complexity.³⁹

These memories of Arguedas' are very recurrent in his letters and, therefore, we should ask how they were shaped and kept alive. Modern psychology has explored what kinds of events are best remembered. Thus, in the nineteenth-century, experimental psychologist Hermann

³⁸ "Fui un niño y un adolescente muy sensible, a tal punto que no he dejado de ser ni el uno ni el otro. Escribí porque deseaba dar testimonio del mundo que tan intensamente conocía: un mundo injusto, de atroz crueldad. Como me crié entre sirvientes indios semiesclavos y tuve la fortuna de alternar con comuneros semilibres pero fuertes, la naturaleza de esas gentes a las que amé y amo con todas mis fuerzas, porque ellos también me amaron así, la naturaleza de esas gentes me conformó y soy incapaz de entender bien y menos de concebir ciertas sutilezas." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Enrique Congrains, Caracas, Venezuela, February 21, 1959, in Carmen Maria Pinilla, ed. *Apuntes Inéditos: Celia y Alicia en la vida de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Fondo Editorial, 1999), 249.

³⁹ See, for example, the famous passage in Arguedas' diaries, where he speaks to a tree. José María Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 185.

Ebbinghaus demonstrated that repetition enhances memory; also, more contemporary research shows that emotionally significant events also create strong, long-lasting memories.⁴⁰ This could be the case of Arguedas and other writers for whom memory plays an important role in their writings. Studying Proust's texts, Martens finds that in recovering the past through involuntary memories, some cue tends to recall a past sensation "which then functions like a metonymy, inasmuch as it brings back other elements of the past scene to the gratified remembered."⁴¹ We can note this in the excerpt of Arguedas' letter mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, when his experience of his sister's caress brought to his memory affectionate childhood events. This memory activation mechanism occurs also in his literary creation. In his most successful novel, *Deep Rivers*, he uses a child protagonist as an alter-ego who recounts in fiction many stories Arguedas experienced during his childhood. Martens also mentions the importance of objects in childhood memories: "Some objects involve emotion: treasured objects are important to children ... [because] the child derives support from things, from personal possessions that are under his or her control."⁴² In *Deep Rivers*, Arguedas gives magic powers to the "Zumbayllu," a kind of spinning toy, which itself contains many sensorial memories. Once it appears in the novel, a series of emotional memories are experienced by the protagonist.⁴³ There are other literary examples that feature a treasured object possessed by a child, such as the case of the tin drum in Gunter Grass's 1959 novel of the same name, where the protagonist received it as a gift on his third birthday, and it plays a mnemonic role throughout the book.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Lorna Martens, *The Promise of Memory*, 29. Hermann Ebbinghaus, *Memory: A Contribution to Experimental Psychology*, tr. Henry A. Ruger and Clara E. Bussenius (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1913), chap. 6.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 207.

⁴³ José María Arguedas, *Deep Rivers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 67.

⁴⁴⁴⁴ Here an excerpt from *The Tin Drum*: "I let one stick fall on the drum as though at random, and ah, the drum responded to Oskar, and Oskar brought the second stick into play. I began to drum, relating everything in order: in

Analyzing memories in writing also implies considering the language of narrative. Nelson asserts that “both psychologists (Bruner and Neisser) and sociolinguists (Chafe and Linde) have argued that a coherent account of a past event contains more than the sequential rendering of what occurred. A full narrative must place the event in context, providing information about when and where the event occurred to orient the listener, and a good narrative must also provide evaluative information, that is, information that conveys the meaning and significance of the event.”⁴⁵ The context in which Arguedas’ narrative is embedded is Andean culture, where he approaches not only nature but the people of the region, who influenced him and his later work. An example of the importance of context in Arguedas’ narrative is a letter written to his brother in 1969, where he says:

That trip we made to Cuzco and Abancay and the Old man’s [their uncle’s father] haciendas! The brutal way we were treated in our stepmother’s house, my closeness, so intimate, to the Indians in all that time; all of that formed the basis, the incomparable material for my works. Our rivers and cliffs, those unparalleled characters that are the neighbors, mestizos, *chalos*⁴⁶ and *comuneros*⁴⁷.”⁴⁸

This memory from Arguedas’ childhood, especially the trip to Cuzco, served as a stepping stone for him to write the first chapter of *Deep Rivers*, where he describes his impression when he arrived in Cuzco for the first time. This was a magic experience for Arguedas because he felt

the beginning was the beginning. The moth between the light bulbs drummed in the hour of my birth; I drummed the cellar stairs with their sixteen steps and my fall from those same stairs during the celebration of my legendary third birthday;” Gunter Grass, *The Tin Drum* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), 506-507.

⁴⁵ Katherine Nelson, “The Emergence of Autobiographical Memory: A Social Cultural Developmental Theory,” *Psychological Review* 111 (2004): 494.

⁴⁶ Pejorative word for referring to *mestizos* from the coast

⁴⁷ *Comunero* is a member of an Indian *Ayllu* or community

⁴⁸ “Ese viaje que hicimos al Cuzco y Abancay y las haciendas del Viejo. La bárbara forma en que nos trataban en casa de la madrastra; mi aproximación tan entrañable a los indios en todo ese tiempo, todo eso formó la base, el material incomparable de mis trabajos. Nuestros ríos y precipicios, esos personajes sin paralelo que son los vecinos, mestizos, *chalos* y *comuneros*...” José María Arguedas, Santiago, Chile, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, May 12, 1969, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 280.

intensely connected to the Inca stones of the city.⁴⁹ The city of Cuzco, is probably the most paradigmatic mixture of colonial and Inca architecture in Peru. The majesty of the Inca stones is a symbol of the resilience of Andean culture after colonization. Spaniards could not remove completely the enormous stones of the Inca city and decided to use them as the basis for their own constructions; in the main square of downtown Cuzco we can see that almost all buildings are half Inca constructions and half Spanish and the narrow streets of the city are all made with stones. All people who travel to Cuzco consider this place as energetic. I have experience myself the magnetism of this city. Arguedas also mentions in this excerpt that he was impressed by the people who surrounded that place. They were not only indigenous but mestizos and people from the coast (*chalos*). We should mention here that Arguedas did not situate himself as to belonging to any one of these groups. As we have seen in other excerpts, he identified with indigenous people, even if he was not one of them. Geographically, Arguedas was from the Andes not from the coast, but racially, he was closer to “white” than to the “mestizo.” In any case, I did not uncover in Arguedas’ letters any explicit self-portrait related to his being conscious of belonging to a specific social group. It seems that beyond his emotional identification with the indigenous, he felt comfortable in his “in betweenness.” In the speech the author delivered when received the literary award *Garcilazo de la Vega* in 1968 he stated that he was not an acculturated man, instead, he was “a happy *daemon* who speaks in Christian and Indian, in Spanish and Quechua.”⁵⁰ In this description Arguedas makes of himself shows his closeness to oral indigenous culture. Indeed, Arguedas was

⁴⁹ “I walked along the wall, stone by stone. I stood back a few steps, contemplating it, and then came closer again. I touched the stone with my hands, following the line, which was as undulating and unpredictable as a river, where the blocks of stone were joined. In the dark street, in the silence, the wall appeared to be alive; the lines I had touched between the stones burned on the palms of my hands. For a long time no one came down the street.” José María Arguedas, *Deep Rivers*, trans. Frances Horning Barraclough (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1978), 6.

⁵⁰ José María Arguedas, “I am not an acculturated,” in Arguedas, *El Zorro de Arriba y el Zorro de Abajo* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 2011), 13.

familiarized with the word *daemon* from the stories he listened since childhood and later on when he recollected oral stories as an anthropologist and a teacher. For example, one of the oral stories Arguedas recollected in the central region of Peru is “El Lago Encantado” [The Enchanted Lake], which narrates the story of a daemon that lives in a lake:

The people from this place are afraid to approach here after six in the evening because they believe that a demon with a long tail that borders in pursuit of a person can leave [from the lake] to disappear people at the bottom of the lake waters and to transform them in fishes with owl heads.⁵¹

The word *daemon* may also imply a position in between Gods and material world as it is portrayed in the novel *Daimon* of Abel Pose, especially in the main character Lope de Aguirre.⁵² We may think that this alterity was a way of handling the dissociative state due to his traumatic childhood, but beyond the psychological reasons for Arguedas constructing of himself, we should focus on what this representation implies for the understanding of Peruvian culture. Constructing himself as an intercultural bridge in Peruvian society, made him (and Peruvians) possible to imagine a society that could overcome differences.

Autobiographical memory is an important part of the letters under study, a fact that allows us to understand Arguedas’ construction of himself. As pointed out by Dorthe Berntsen and David Rubin in the introduction of the book *Understanding Autobiographical Memory*: “The ability to remember personal events is at the heart of what defines an individual as a person with obligations, roles, and commitments in a given society. It enables us to draw lessons from our past

⁵¹ “Las personas de este lugar tienen el temor de acercarse después de las seis de la tarde porque creen que puede salir un demonio con una cola larga que bordea en pos de una persona para desaparecerlo en el fondo de sus aguas y volverlos en peses con cabeza de lechuza.” Jose Maria Arguedas, “Recopilación de Relatos Orales. Departamento de Junín Huancayo y Tarma.” In *Archivo Etnográfico José María Arguedas* <http://www.centenarioarguedas.gob.pe/?p=556>

⁵² Abel Posse, *Daimon* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992).

and plan our personal future. It helps us to orientate and participate in complex social communities. Autobiographical memory is therefore crucial for a sense of identity, continuity, and direction in life.”⁵³ Arguedas lost his mother at three years of age. According to what he says in his letters, this fact was determinant in his life and personality, and probably had some influence in his tendency towards anxiety and depression, from which he suffered his entire life. On January 31, 1944, he writes to his brother:

Do you remember when I was a child I had horrible nighttime frights? Our father had to get up and take me into the corridor; I looked at the sky, breathed in the cold air, and it calmed me. Later, already in school, I suffered from some crises; it was a kind of sudden fear of death: one time I went to where our old man was, another time to our uncle Pepe.⁵⁴

In this excerpt, Arguedas fashions himself as a child with a tremendous need for protection. This lack of affection he suffered in his family that generated such anxiety would remain with him as a mark throughout his adult life. As confirmed by family and friends in various testimonies, Arguedas’ warmth was at the same time, a demand for love. This contradictory aspect (lacking/giving/demanding love) of Arguedas will be analyzed more in detail in Chapter Two.

Arguedas’ self-construction in his letters could be interpreted, to some extent, as an artificial construction, where he emphasized the facets by which he wanted other people to remember him. He did not want his life as represented to others to be distorted as being different from his memories, that is, as he remembered them himself. Therefore, in the last letter to his brother he says:

⁵³ Dorte Berntsen and David C. Ruben, *Understanding Autobiographical Memory* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1.

⁵⁴ “¿Te acuerdas que de niño me daban unos horribles espantos nocturnos? Nuestro padre tenía que levantarse y sacarme al corredor; miraba al cielo, respiraba el aire frío, y me calmaba. Después ya en el Colegio, padecí de algunas crisis: era una especie de repentino temor a la muerte: una vez me fui hasta donde nuestro viejo, otra donde nuestro tío Pepe.” José María Arguedas, Lima, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, January 31, 1944, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 172.

I can't go on any more. I don't sleep. I don't read. I can't speak well or write. Perhaps journalists and scholars will seek you out. Remember our life and tell them how I lived a little different than you, first with the stepmother and then with our old man. We were together in Viseca and Lima. Don't cry for me. I did more than what could be expected of me.... Brother: I lived cleanly, as our people⁵⁵ are in their souls, and as our humble and proud father was. Help me by keeping my life from being distorted or slandered. I love you and all the more at this moment.⁵⁶

In this excerpt we can note Arguedas' awareness of his role in Peruvian cultural history. He acknowledges his responsibility for representing "his people" properly, the people from the Andes; that is why he emphasizes that he lived as "cleanly" as they did, meaning that he perceived these people as transparent, honest; different from the people of the coastal cities of Peru. Furthermore, Gustavo Gutiérrez interprets the use of "cleanly" in Arguedas as being associated with national identity. What is "dirty" would be what comes from outside, an alienating force. For Arguedas, to keep your soul clean would imply keeping your cultural identity.⁵⁷ In the original Spanish passage of this letter, Arguedas writes the Quechua word "runas" to refer to the people of the Andes among whom he grew up. This means that he could not find a better word in Spanish to represent them appropriately; they should be named in their own language. When including a Quechua word among Spanish words, he is creating a language-bridge as a symbolic example of what he did his entire life, connecting cultures and people from the Andes and the Coast in Peru.

⁵⁵ Arguedas uses the Quechua word "runas" which means "men, people."

⁵⁶ "Yo ya no puedo más. No duermo. No leo. No puedo hablar bien ni escribir. Quizá los periodistas y estudiosos te busquen. Recuerda nuestra vida y diles cómo yo viví un poco distinto que tú, primero con la madrastra y después con nuestro viejo. Estuvimos juntos en Viseca y en Lima. No me lloren. Hice más de lo que de mí se podía esperar. (...) Hermano: viví limpiamente como son en su alma nuestros **runas** y lo fue nuestro humilde y orgulloso padre. Ayúdame en cuanto a que no se tergiverse mi vida o se le calumnie. Te ama y más en esta hora." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, August 28, 1969, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 287.

⁵⁷ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Entre las Calandrias. Un Ensayo sobre José María Arguedas* (Lima: Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, 2014), 57.

Summing up, Arguedas' memories of childhood in his letters portray ambivalent feelings of suffering and tenderness, with an emphasis on the need for protection, identification with the Andean world vision, and the creation of a new sense of "otherness," one more closely related to emotions than to culture per se. As Arguedas self-constructs his past, he can deploy the resulting alterity resulting from his early traumas and palliative experiences with indigenous people to fashion himself in a pivotal role of Peruvian cultural bridging.

2.2 CHAPTER 2: EMBODIMENT OF THE NATION

In this chapter I discuss how Arguedas established himself as a representative of the Peruvian nation, not simply of the Andean region but the whole of Peru. As we shall see, important literary and ideological influences appear in the letters, such as the Peruvian poet César Vallejo and the political thinker José Carlos Mariátegui; both shared a deep concern for understanding Peru. Among the influences of foreign writers who appear in the letters is Walt Whitman, whose poetry also reflects a sense of identification with his own country, the United States.

In the nineteenth century many authors sought to be or were acclaimed as the national bard: Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Thomas Moore, or Goethe—retrospectively, Dante Alighieri and Cervantes. In his book about folk and pop in American culture, Gene Bluestein dedicates a chapter on the study of Johann Gottfried von Herder and his ideology regarding folklore. In contrast to the ideals of Enlightenment, Herder had a critical idea of progress and considered important to revival the myths and popular culture to understand a nation. "Herder believed that a nation's formal literature needed to be based on the creative accomplishments of its folk, regardless

of how crude that body of materials may seem to sophisticated society.”⁵⁸ His ideas had a great influence on anthropological methodology and literature during the nineteenth century. Bluestein asserts that “Herder tried to replace a mechanistic philosophy with an organic approach that underscored the interaction of body and soul, matter and mind, and ultimately individual and society.”⁵⁹ Walt Whitman inherited this tradition of romantic writers who embodied the nation recovering its popular culture, and Arguedas’ identification with his poetry is a sign that he also followed the same path of rescuing the nation through its myths and folklore.

Orphic poetry as analyzed by R.A Yoder also sheds light on this type of writer. Yoder in his study of Ralph Waldo Emerson, understands the orphic poet as a mediator between imagination and science because, same as Orpheus, who tamed that nature when he sang, the orphic poet represents “the reflexive or self-conscious of the imagination, the power by which man distinguishes himself as the single artificer of the word in which he sings.”⁶⁰ Cesar Salgado makes a twist in this topic on which he considers an orphic poet in Latin America: Jose Lezama Lima. According to Salgado “orphic dualism is the best expression of the Homeric epos since it makes the hero’s voyage a double movement of ascent and descent, sacralizing man and humanizing the gods.”⁶¹ Thus, in Lezama Lima, “song and poetry can traverse like a beam of light through darkness.”⁶² We could say that Arguedas fits also with this characteristic of being an orphic poet because he was a mediator between imagination (mythology that feed his creative writing) and

⁵⁸ Gene Bluestein, *Poplore Folk and Pop in American Culture* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994), 33.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁶⁰ R.A. Yoder, *Emerson and the Orphic Poet in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), xiii.

⁶¹ Cesar Augusto Salgado, *From Modernism to Neobaroque Joyce and Lezama Lima* (London: Associated University Presses), 123.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 124.

science (anthropology that helped him understand cultural processes); he moved within “in-betweenness”: the rational, on the one hand; and the magic, reality and fiction, on the other.

As a would-be national bard, Arguedas wanted more than to be a good writer, he wanted his writing to be a true representation of Peru, a country of nuances and ambiguities. In his testimony given at the meeting of fiction writers in Arequipa in 1965 he says:

I started writing when I read the first stories about Indians, by writers who I respect describing them in such a false way, from whom I have gotten lessons such as López Albújar and Ventura García Calderón. López Albújar knew the Indians from his position as a judge in criminal matters and Mr. Ventura García Calderón, I do not know how he had heard of them.⁶³

Estelle Tarica, in his book *The Inner Life of Mestizo Nationalism*, defines a new type of indigenism, which would be the one Arguedas belongs to (in contrast to Albújar and Calderón), the “intimate *indigenismo*”:

The “intimate” indigenismo (...) refers to those strands of indigenista discourse that appeal to the existence of interior and subjective realms of interethnic affinity and sympathy. These instances of indigenista ideology involve a turn to an interior sphere of Indianness that non-Indians share with Indians, a sphere that forms the basis of mestizo nationality.⁶⁴

Arguedas, due to his shared experiences with indigenous people was able to differentiate himself from other types of indigenismo, ones that were external to Andean culture. He feels a mission to speak of Andean Peru and its people, as he had seen and known them, and not like other writers had represented it, those who did not know indigenous culture directly. Thus, in a letter to his friend José Ortiz Reyes in 1938, Arguedas writes:

⁶³ “Yo comencé a escribir cuando leí las primeras narraciones sobre los indios, los describían de una forma tan falsa escritores a quienes yo respeto, de quienes he recibido lecciones como López Albújar, como Ventura García Calderón. López Albújar conocía a los indios desde su despacho de Juez en asuntos penales y el señor Ventura García Calderón no sé cómo había oído hablar de ellos.” Primer encuentro de Narradores Peruanos-Arequipa 1965 (Lima: Casa de la Cultura del Perú, 1969), 40.

⁶⁴ Estelle Tarica, *The Inner Life of Mestizo Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xx.

What is the truly representative literature of Peru? Which is the one that has worth? We will demonstrate that it's ours, facing that flimsy, very mediocre and artificial production of theirs; we will show it's ours, full of life, full of youth and with an undisputed artistic and human value.⁶⁵

A messianic attitude can be noted in the way Arguedas writes here. He says that only his literature (although he uses "ours," including his friends) would save the representative literature of Peru, in opposition to the other "artificial" literature. He does not state explicitly to whom he refers by saying "theirs," but probably he refers to the writers who did not represent accurately indigenous Peruvian people, such as Ventura García Calderón or Enrique López Albuja. Arguedas believed he had the knowledge and therefore the responsibility to convey Peruvian society the reality of indigenous people from inside, not artificially as an outsider. He had a more intimate relation with indigenous people and wanted to pour this intimacy into his literature. As Tarica points out, "the 'intimate' of which Arguedas speaks, signals a new way of describing the regional and national self in the first half of the twentieth century."⁶⁶

In the rest of this chapter, first I am going to explore what implied for Arguedas to represent his country. In doing so, it is important to analyze the influence other writers, such as Whitman and Vallejo had an influence over him. Second, I will try to identify his position in the political arena in order to see if his embodiment of the nation implied a political attitude. Finally, I will show how he interconnected the mythical tradition with the process of transformation of modern Peruvian society.

⁶⁵ "¿Cuál es la literatura verdaderamente representativa del Perú? ¿Cuál es la que vale? Demostraremos que la nuestra; frente a esa producción endeble, mediocrísima y artificiosa de ellos; mostraremos la nuestra; plena de vida, llena de juventud y de un valor artístico y humano indiscutible." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to José Ortiz Reyes, Lima Perú, no date (probably August, 1938) in Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas, Recuerdos de una Amistad* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 42.

⁶⁶ Estelle Tarica, *The Inner Life of Mestizo Nationalism*, xiii.

But what does it mean for Arguedas “to truly represent Peru?” Peru is a complex country that trails behind it the wounds of its own colonization and, at the same time, contains within it a great deal of geographical beauty and cultural diversity. It is thus an ambivalent, paradoxical country. To truly represent Peru would imply the need to represent that ambivalence, which generates hope and despair at the same time. Such ambivalence and disappointment are expressed when Arguedas writes to his friend Emilio Adolfo Westphalen in 1958:

We [he and his first wife Celia Bustamante] are back in the homeland, and we suffer it. It is now much easier for us to understand the complaints of those who could not and cannot be readjusted to our environment and even less to learn to live in it. It is truly a barbaric country because brute force reigns almost without limitations and intelligence and statute law hardly matter. They are ignored. The misery appears to us now far more brutal, because the insolence and impunity of the rich has no limits. Faced with these things we rarely find compensation, with the exception of friends and a little more, [like] the possibilities to create even though it is not but for oneself and friends. And something else, what is a sure source of happiness: the beauty of the country.⁶⁷

Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, Peruvian surrealist poet, lived for a while in New York and Italy, and later returned to Peru. In this excerpt we see that Arguedas shares with his friend the experience of returning home after his trip to Europe. In comparison with European countries, in the eyes of Arguedas, Peru looks more complex, more difficult to live in. Arguedas used very powerful terms to refer to the problems of Peru: “barbaric,” “brute force,” “brutal,” “impunity”

⁶⁷ “Estamos nuevamente en la patria, y sufriendola. Nos resulta ahora mucho más fácil comprender las quejas de quienes no podían y no pueden reacondicionarse a nuestro medio y menos aún aprender a vivir en él. Es verdaderamente un país bárbaro porque la fuerza bruta reina casi sin limitaciones y la inteligencia y el derecho escrito apenas tienen importancia. No se les hace caso. La miseria se nos aparece ahora como mucho más brutal, porque la insolencia y la impunidad de los ricos no tienen límites. Frente a estas cosas encontramos apenas compensaciones, a no ser los amigos y un poco más las posibilidades de crear aunque no sea sino para uno mismo y los amigos. Y algo más, lo que sí es una fuente segura de felicidad: la belleza del país.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, (Italy?), December 15, 1958, in Inés Westphalen Ortiz, *El Río y El Mar. Correspondencia José María Arguedas/Emilio Adolfo Westphalen* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011), 196.

that produce a strong impression on the reader. But also this inevitable comparison forms a poignant contrast to the beauty of the country and the affection he holds for his Peruvian friends.

The words used by Arguedas are frequently as intense as the emotions he wants to convey. He is very touched by the beauty of the country and when he visits a Peruvian city, he sees summed up the beauty of the whole country. A typical case, for Arguedas, is the city of Cuzco perhaps because there is no better place to condense both the beauty and complexity of Peru than in that city. In Cuzco the encounter between nature, culture, and architecture is symbolically appreciated. This city was not only an inspiration for his literary creation, as in *Deep Rivers*; but it was also a matter of a work commissioned by the government tourism corporation that Arguedas did.⁶⁸ Even in this non-literary piece of writing, Arguedas did not lose the opportunity to tell the story of Peru through the history of Cuzco. His intention is always totalizing, to represent Peru in the most complete way possible, even if the project required talking only about the city. Referring to this work, in a letter to his brother, Arístides, in 1946 Arguedas says:

I just submitted a small book about Cuzco to the Tourism Corporation; I worked hard on that essay; I wrote it with the greatest enthusiasm: it is the history of Peruvian culture through the history of Cuzco.⁶⁹

We could say that there is a similarity between how Arguedas sees Peru embodied in Cuzco and how he sees himself as embodiment of the nation; producing in both cases a similar synecdoche.

⁶⁸ Jose Maria Arguedas, *Cusco* (Lima: Corporación Nacional de Turismo, 1947).

⁶⁹ “Acabo de entregar un pequeño libro sobre el Cuzco, para la Corporación de Turismo; he trabajado intensamente en ese ensayo; lo he escrito con el más grande entusiasmo: es una historia de la cultura del Perú a través de la historia del Cuzco.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, September 30, 1946, in Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia: Cartas de José María Arguedas a Arístides y Nelly Arguedas, a Rosa Pozo Navarro y Yolanda López Pozo* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1999), 203.

In another moment, Arguedas explicitly states that Peru, with its intensity, beauty, and contradictions, lives within him; and it is this feeling of incorporating the embodiment of Peru that helps him in his creative process. The way he perceives and lives Peru offers him the momentum to describe it in his novels. For example, in a letter to Manuel Moreno Jimeno in 1940, he writes:

I feel really prepared, when I write I have the awareness and conviction, with enough passion and truth, that this Peruvian world lives within me, so beautiful, so full of pain and struggle, so great and noble, to be described in a novel.⁷⁰

This awareness that Arguedas sustains to embody the nation (“this Peruvian world lives within me”), causes him to feel that he is needed in his country.

Being conscious of his psychological distress, he struggles to recover from it in order to fulfill the mission he had set for himself: to describe the Peruvian society of his time. This is shown in a letter in 1968 to John Murra, where he says:

There are great people everywhere, and this country needs a lot of its few good people. I think I'm one of them. I need to recover; I'm forced to do it. Dr. Viñar has generously answered me too. Neurotics and little messianic people like me, are often loved, sometimes more than we deserve.⁷¹

Dr. Viñar was one of the psychiatrists who treated Arguedas in Lima for his psychic ailments. Describing himself as “one of the few good people” needed in his country, Arguedas

⁷⁰ “Me siento realmente dispuesto, cuando escribo, tengo la conciencia y la convicción, de que vive en mí, con la suficiente pasión y verdad, este mundo del Perú, tan hermoso, tan pleno de dolor y de lucha, tan grande y noble para ser descrito en una novela.” José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú, to Manuel Moreno Jimeno, no date (probably July/August, 1940), in Roland Forgues, ed., *José María Arguedas: La Letra Inmortal: Correspondencia con Manuel Moreno Jimeno* (Lima: Ediciones de los Ríos Profundos, 1993), 84.

⁷¹ “Hay gente formidable en todas partes, y este país necesita mucho de sus pocas buenas personas. Yo creo ser una de ellas. Necesito recuperarme; estoy obligado a hacerlo. El Dr. Viñar me ha contestado generosamente también. A los neuróticos algo mesiánicos suelen amarnos, a veces más de lo que merecemos.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to John Murra (USA), March 17, 1968, in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 169.

implies that he possesses an empowering personality despite his psychological illness. Portraying himself as “neurotic and little messianic” suggests he is one of those Peruvians with an un-common personality that is tolerated by their compatriots not only because they elicit compassion but also because these type of people are needed for accomplishing their mission. We may say that this expression is a humorous rhetorical way of deprecating himself and at same time showing awareness of his importance for Peruvian society.

Arguedas was not only concerned with the suffering of indigenous people, but the suffering of all people; therefore his identification with César Vallejo, José Carlos Mariátegui, or Walt Whitman is not surprising, being writers with totalizing projects and for whom he shows admiration in his letters. Thus, in a letter to Adolfo Westphalen, he refers to the poem “Song of myself” by Whitman:

You can imagine Emilio how awful last week was! But today I think I've started another resurrection. Besides all these pressures and severe personal problems that each of us has, is added the ones that affect all of us. What is happening in Biafra, in Czechoslovakia, in Brea and Pariñas. We have to suffer everything! And everything is endured and even dominated when one has something to oppose it. That piece of Whitman: “Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would kill me, If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.”⁷²

⁷² “Tú puedes imaginarte Emilio lo atroz que ha sido la semana pasada! Pero hoy creo haber iniciado otra resurrección. También que a todas esas presiones y problemas agudos particulares que cada quien tenemos, se agregan los que nos afectan a todos. Lo de Biafra, lo de Checoslovaquia, lo de Brea y Pariñas. ¡Tenemos que sufrirlo todo! Y todo se sobrelleva y hasta se domina cuando uno tiene otra cosa que oponerle. Aquel trozo de Whitman: ‘Tremenda y deslumbrante la aurora me mataría si yo no tuviera otra Aurora dentro de mí’.” José María Arguedas, Chimbote, Perú, to Emilio Adolfo Westphalen, September 9, 1968, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 178. The reference to the poem of Whitman is to “Song of Myself” number 25. In Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, ed. Robert Hass and Paul Ebenkamp (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2010), 33. Historical context: In 1968, Nigerian military forces suppressed the Biafran secession; Soviet troops invaded Czechoslovakia to quell the “Prague Spring”; and the US-dominated International Petroleum Company maintained control over the Brea and Pariñas oil fields in northern Peru despite nominal nationalization.

Arguedas encourages himself with these verses of Whitman and portrays himself as someone who was capable of enduring his own and others' suffering.⁷³ Having a fragile psychological state of mind, we could then ask, what was this "sun-rise" inside of him? How much had he to offer to "illuminate others?" It was probably his unique and privileged cultural position in Peruvian society what made him believe he was capable of teaching something new to his people and to wholly believe in this messianic mission.

Arguedas also shared his interest in Whitman with his first wife, Celia Bustamente. When he was in Churín, outside Lima, in 1944, she wrote to encourage him using some verses of Whitman's "Song of Myself." In the letter she wrote to him, we read:

I have a hope and a desire that you come back well, or at least better, to finish taking care of yourself here. I'll copy a few pieces of Whitman to you that have impressed me among many, and there are others better than those I'm copying to you, but these are almost at the end of the book:

"You are also asking me questions and I hear you,
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself.

Sit a while dear son,

Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,

But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes,

I kiss you with a good-by kiss and open the gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,

Now I wash the gum from your eyes,

You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,

Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,

To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me,

shout, and laughingly dash with your hair."

And this other fragment:

⁷³ Harold Blume considers that in the solipsism of major American poets—including Whitman—askesis tends to center on the self's awareness of others selves. In the case of Whitman this solipsism is taken to an extreme identifying himself with the sun. Harold Blume, *The Anxiety of Influence A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 132-33.

“My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between
the steps,
All below duly traveled, and still I mount and mount.
Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me.”⁷⁴

It is interesting to note that his wife chose precisely these verses of “The Song of Myself” to encourage Arguedas. It is well known that the relationship Arguedas had with his first wife was more one between a mother and his son. As described by him, she was “una amalgama increíble de madre, hermana y tutora” [an incredible blend of mother, sister and tutor].⁷⁵ In the fragment of poem 46 of “Song of Myself” she sent to him, a father encourages his son to face life without fear,

⁷⁴ “Tengo una esperanza y un deseo de que regreses bien, o por lo menos mejor, para terminar de cuidarte acá. Voy a copiarte unos trozos de Whitman que me han impresionado entre muchos, y hay otros mejores que los que te copio, pero estos son casi al final del libro:

Tú también me haces preguntas y yo te escucho
y te digo que no tengo respuesta,
que la respuesta has de encontrarla tú solo.
Siéntate un momento, hijo mío.
Aquí tienes pan, come,
y leche, bebe.
Pero después que hayas dormido y renovado tus
Vestidos, te besaré, te diré adiós y te abriré la
Puerta para que salgas de nuevo.
Largo tiempo has soñado sueños despreciables:
ven, que te limpie los ojos...
y acostúmbrate ya al resplandor de la luz.
Largo tiempo has chapoteado a la orilla, agarrado a un madero,
Ahora tienes que ser un nadador intrépido;
Aventúrate en alta mar, flota,
mírame confiado
y arremete contra la ola.

Y este otro fragmento:

Como mis pies huella los picos de las estrellas,
cada paso mío es una ristra de edades
y entre cada paso voy dejando manojos de milenios...
todo cuanto hay debajo de mí lo han andado mis pies
y aún ascendiendo...y ascendiendo...
en cada zancada hacia la luz, detrás de mí se inclinan los fantasmas.

Celia Bustamante, Lima Perú, to José María Arguedas, April 21, 1944, In Pinilla, *Apuntes Inéditos*, 134.

The references to the poems of Whitman are “Song of Myself,” 46 and 44. In Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, ed. Robert Hass and Paul Ebenkamp, (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2010), 64-65, 54

⁷⁵ José María Arguedas to John Murra, July, 3, 1967, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas a Arguedas*, 158.

and the other fragment of poem 44 describes metaphorically a person making his way over all difficulties. Arguedas enjoyed reading these verses as we can see in his answer to his wife:

Your letter came to me like the contents of Whitman's poem. I can't tell you how good [to have it]! How I love you and admire you, and how I love the moment you began to love me! With a companion like you, with your love, with your strong spirit next to me, we can well defeat death, and keep it in check until we've given life all our fervor! This may be the happiest moment in my life! I'm enlightened and purified because I've felt all the light of your soul.⁷⁶

The enthusiasm Arguedas shows is evident and could appear even exaggerated. In this letter he expresses that there is no difference between the content of the poem and the effect his wife's letter provoked in him. Both conveyed strength and courage, and make him feel illuminated. Illuminated for what? – maybe for accomplishing his mission to describe Perú through his work. As we can see, Arguedas uses intense expressions and exaggerated emotions, saying that he feels even capable to “defeat death.” In this mutual apotheosis, near-immortality beckoned.

Achieving the authorial immortality of national embodiment depended upon Arguedas being recognized. The recognition he expects and desires is that which reveals him as an author representing his country. His joy is evident when one of his works is recognized in this way. For example, in a letter to his Chilean psychoanalyst, Lola Hoffmann, he proudly tells her about a newspaper article in which he is recognized as the greatest living Peruvian writer after publishing his indigenista short story, “The Agony of Rasuñiti,” about the ceremonial death of an Andean village dancer:

⁷⁶ “Tu carta me ha llegado como el contenido del poema de Whitman. ¡No podría decirte lo bien! ¡Cómo te adoro y te admiro, cómo amo el instante que empezaste a quererme! ¡Con una compañía como tú, con tu amor, con tu espíritu fuerte a mi lado, bien podemos vencer a la muerte, y atajarla hasta cuando hayamos rendido a la vida todo nuestro fuego! ¡Es acaso el instante más feliz de mi vida! Estoy iluminado y purificado porque he sentido toda la luz de tu alma.” José María Arguedas, Churín, Perú to Celia Bustamante (April 1944?), in Carmen María Pinilla, ed. *Apuntes Inéditos: Celia y Alicia en la Vida de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2007), 136.

I just finished a poem in Quechua to Tupac Amaru [the last Incan monarch, executed by the Spanish in 1572], a copy of which I send you. I've written a series of three articles in the Literary Supplement of *El Comercio* on the process of evolution, stylization and distortion of some of the most direct and now marketed expressions of our traditional art. The circulation of "The Agony of Rasu Niti" has created enthusiasm among young people and critics. Please let me send you a note that appeared in the Supplement of *El Comercio*. A young writer who recently arrived from Europe, where he was for several years, wrote another note in the new newspaper *Expreso* and he has declared that I should be considered as the finest writer in Peru.⁷⁷

By contrast, on another occasion, he feels humiliated when his work is not recognized.

In a letter he wrote to his friend Moreno Jimeno, Arguedas expresses discomfort after the talk given by Lilo Linke (a German journalist and writer exiled in Ecuador), who referred to his poetic work; the next day the press did not reveal this fact and Arguedas' work went unnoticed:

That tall and long *gringa* who was in Lima, Lilo Linke, gave a lecture at the U. of Cuzco on Peruvian, Colombian and Ecuadorian literature; when speaking about the Peruvian [literature] she referred to Ciro [Alegría] and me, and according to someone who heard her, she did a study on "Canto Kechwa" and talked quite a long time; the next day the newspapers reported that she had referred 'only' to Ciro.⁷⁸

The Peruvian writer Ciro Alegría gained international recognition with his novel *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* [Broad and Alien is the World] that depicted an upland Andean community. This novel won the Latin American novel prize in 1941, the time this letter was written. It was probably this reason why the press paid more attention to Alegría than to Arguedas. At that time Arguedas

⁷⁷ "Acabo de concluir un poema en quechua a Túpac Amaru, cuya copia le envío. He escrito una serie de tres artículos en el Suplemento Literario de El Comercio sobre el proceso de evolución, estilización y deformación de algunas de las expresiones más directas y ahora comercializadas de nuestro arte tradicional. La divulgación de "La agonía de Rasu Niti" ha creado un entusiasmo entre los jóvenes y críticos. Me permito enviarle una nota aparecida en el Suplemento de El Comercio. Un escritor joven que hace poco llegó de Europa donde estuvo varios años escribió otra nota en el nuevo periódico Expreso y ha afirmado que se me debe considerar como el escritor de mayor categoría en el Perú." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Lola Hoffmann, Santiago, Chile, July 3, 1962, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 79.

⁷⁸ "Esa gringa alta y larga que estuvo en Lima, Lilo Linke, dio una conferencia en la U. del Cuzco, sobre literatura peruana, colombiana y ecuatoriana; al hablar de la peruana se refirió a Ciro y a mí, y según me dice uno que la escuchó, hizo un estudio sobre "Canto Kechwa" y habló bastante largo; al día siguiente los periódicos dijeron que "únicamente" se había ocupado de Ciro." José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Lima, to Manuel Moreno Jimeno, no date (probably April, 1941), in Roland Forgues, ed., *La Letra Inmortal*, 106.

was still a young novelist who was started his successful career. Still, the slight of the note stung even if it was the mere oversight of a reporter.

While it is true that Arguedas wanted to be recognized, he did not like to be framed inside an ideological dogma. For example, he consulted his friends when he wrote a poem that he thought could be associated with communist ideology.⁷⁹ At the time, the CIA had interest in Peruvian Communism.⁸⁰ So, he asked John Murra his opinion in 1962:

I wrote the Poem to 'Tupac Amaru' in the sad days when villagers were killed. I'm not yet decided to distribute it. I beg you, if you can, send me a few lines giving me your opinion about whether it could be interpreted as a call to rebellion. Dr. Valcárcel, who is so careful and has been all his life, thinks it's not, but I feel some fear. I don't want to be a "stinking communist" in my homeland. I'm a free man; I have irreparable differences with the Communists and, on the other hand, I'm on a blacklist of the United States Embassy.⁸¹

The poem, "Túpac Amaru," concerns how indigenous people would invade the capital and produce a transformation in the country. The language of this poem is metaphoric and could be interpreted as a call to rebellion, and it is, to some extent, foretelling the future. Arguedas had the sensitivity to foresee the process of migration that would affect the character and appearance of Lima. In the above letter's excerpt, Arguedas portrays himself as a cautious person who has no desire to engage himself completely with a political position.

⁷⁹ The name of the poem is "Himno Canción a nuestro Padre Creador Túpac Amaru" [Hymn Song to our Father Creator Tupac Amaru] and was published in 1962 in both languages, Quechua and Spanish. See Appendix A.

⁸⁰ See the declassified document:

http://www.foia.cia.gov/sites/default/files/document_conversions/89801/DOC_0000013615.pdf

⁸¹ "El Poema a 'Túpac Amaru,' lo escribí en los tristes días en que se mataba comuneros. No estoy aún decidido a difundirlo. Te ruego que, si te es posible, me pongas unas líneas dándome tu opinión acerca de si podría ser interpretado como un llamado a la rebelión. El Dr. Valcárcel, que es tan prudente y lo ha sido durante toda su vida, cree que no, pero yo siento algún temor. No deseo ser en mi patria un "apestado comunista." Soy un hombre libre; tengo discrepancias irremediables con los comunistas y, por otra parte estoy en la lista negra de la Embajada de los Estados Unidos." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to John Murra (USA), August 15, 1962 in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas* 84.

In the early 60s, Peruvian peasants began to rebel against injustices and confiscated some lands for their own. Some of these rebellions were successful, like the one produced in *La Convención* (Cuzco). The next excerpt written to Murra shows a contradictory, ambivalent Arguedas, who was not sure how to balance his indignation towards injustice and his political reputation as a peaceful person. He does not want to be associated with either the left or right, he just wants to be free, as expressed here:

Politics has been rough in Peru. Both warring camps, the left and the right, set out the thing in quite an inhumane way: either you are with them or against them; who intends to be free is shot from two fronts⁸²

Despite his identification with the downtrodden, Arguedas refused the politics of polarization, a logical extension of his drive to embody the nation as including everyone. Although Arguedas did not formally belong to any party, he did recognize the ideological influence of José Carlos Mariátegui, the founder of the Communist Party in Peru, whom he considered one of his best influences in understanding Peruvian society. The magazine *Amauta*, directed by Mariátegui, was decisive for the intellectual formation of Arguedas; he says so in his testimony of 1965:

I declare with complete joy that without ‘Amauta,’ the journal directed by Mariátegui, I would be nothing ... I found in the journal a doctrinal orientation full of unwavering faith in mankind and in Peru, through that faith in the future of mankind, faith that has not been destroyed and will never be destroyed in those of us who live then, [when] we began to analyze our own experiences and act on our faith in the people with whom we lived. There we found much of the interior world of the indigenous people, the mestizo and even the gentlemen, to whom we do not deny the opportunity to contribute as well in the construction of the great Peru.⁸³

⁸² “La política se ha hecho durísima en el Perú. Ambos bandos en lucha: la izquierda y la derecha plantean la cosa en forma bastante inhumana: o se está con ellos o contra ellos; al que pretende ser libre le disparan de los dos frentes.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra (USA), February 21, 1961 in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 54.

⁸³ “Yo declaro con todo júbilo que sin ‘Amauta,’ la revista dirigida por Mariátegui no sería nada,... Yo encontraba en la revista una orientación doctrinaria llena de una fe inquebrantable sobre el hombre y sobre el Perú, a través de esa fe en el porvenir del hombre, fe que no se ha destruido ni se destruirá jamás en quienes vivimos entonces, es que empezamos a analizar nuestras propias vivencias y a dar curso a nuestra fe en el pueblo que habíamos vivido. Allí

We should take note of the religious language that Arguedas is using to describe the journal *Amauta*, which was an avant-garde cultural magazine in its time.⁸⁴ In this excerpt he uses the word “faith” three times, giving to his words a strong tone of religious discourse. Arguedas had, as many Peruvians of his time, a Catholic education, which probably influenced him in his cognitive process, begetting a future-minded, providentialist view of history as teleological and progressive. But Arguedas’ faith goes beyond his religious beliefs. His faith comes from the hope for the country through its artists in the future. Even though *Amauta* had a socialist orientation, most of its articles were related more to culture and art than to politics. Not only Peruvians but international intellectuals and artists published there.

Amauta provided an opportunity for “*indigenista*” artists and left intellectuals to think about Peruvian society. Any contemporary reader the journal *Amauta* will immediately understand the emotion and hope that Arguedas felt when reading it. The quality and the content of the articles are impressive. After *Amauta*, there was not any cultural journal of this quality and ambition in Peru. In the excerpt above, we can see that Arguedas valued the social inclusiveness immediately apparent in *Amauta*: “There we found much of the interior world of the indigenous people, the mestizo and even the gentlemen.”⁸⁵ All social classes were portrayed in the journal. Eugene Gogol

descubrimos gran parte del mundo interior del pueblo indígena, el mestizo y aún de los señores, a quien no les negamos la posibilidad de contribuir también en la construcción del gran Perú.” Testimony of José María Arguedas. Primer encuentro de narradores peruanos [First Encounter of Peruvian Fiction Writers], Arequipa, 1965 (Lima: Ed. Casa de la Cultura, 1969) in Roland Forgues, ed., *La Letra Inmortal*, p. 27.

⁸⁴ “The three and a half decades of Mariátegui’s brief life (1894-1930) are a volcanic eruption of creative thought, which brings forth a vast panorama of revolutionary thought and action—from politics to art, poetry to literature, to Marxist and labor organization.” Eugene Gogol, *The Concept of the Other in Latin American Liberation: Fusing Emancipatory Philosophic Thought and Social Revolt* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2002), 99. Mariátegui founded *Amauta* (1926–30), a Marxist cultural and literary journal that published avant-garde writing. For further information on the role *Amauta* played in the Latin American intellectual arena see Gogol, *The Concept of the Other in Latin American Liberation*, 351-4.

⁸⁵ Roland Forgues, ed., *La Letra Inmortal*, p. 27.

states that “six themes were especially important in the journal: (1) the publication of Mariategui’s own writing; (2) the Indigenous movement; (3) art and culture as a world phenomenon, with emphasis on Peru; (4) writings on Marxism being developed and debated in Europe, particularly in Russia; (5) a political panorama of conferences, activities, meetings documents; (6) reviews and summaries of books and magazines.”⁸⁶ It is not difficult to imagine how the content of this journal gave hope to Arguedas about the possibility of a more integrated Peruvian society.

Besides that integration, one of Arguedas’ main goals was preserving Quechua culture, a goal that made him as a Quechua speaker central to the project of culturally integrating through new communication bridges. Aware that he would need a successor to continue with this mission, he always encouraged Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, his disciple, to become more knowledgeable about Andean culture. In a letter he wrote to him on November 5, 1966, Arguedas writes:

It’s advisable that you read the book about the myths of Huarichirí published by Galante. The Quechua text was written at the end of XVI century. I’ve translated it into Spanish and the book will appear in December.⁸⁷

The original text was itself a communication bridge between the indigenous past and the then-dawning colonial future. It was John Murra, as mentioned above, friend of Arguedas and American anthropologist interested in Peruvian culture, who urged Arguedas to translate the manuscripts of Huarochirí, a group of myths gathered by the Jesuit priest Francisco de Avila during the sixteenth century in Peru. Huarochirí is a province of Lima, the Peruvian capital, and the seat of the Peruvian Viceroyalty. In 1598 Francisco de Avila was assigned as a priest to Huarochiri

⁸⁶ Eugene Gogol, *The Concept of Other in Latin American Liberation*, 351.

⁸⁷ “Conviene que leas el libro sobre los mitos de Huarochirí publicado por Galante. El texto quechua fue escrito a fines del siglo XVI. Yo he hecho una traducción al castellano y el libro aparecerá en diciembre”. José María Arguedas, Lima, to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, Paris, Nov. 5, 1966, in Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad.*, 217.

who was dedicated to preaching against idolatries. In 1608 he wrote a treatise about the superstitions and false gods that indigenous people believed in, as perceived by the Catholic faith. De Avila did not make the transcription himself; he was helped by an indigenous assistant converted to Christianity, and probably named Tomás.⁸⁸ The knowledge Tomás had of the model imposed by the Spaniards to transcribe from Quechua, allowed him to write a document about indigenous myths and religious beliefs. In the transition of these myths from orality to written text new elements were introduced; for example, the transcription criticized the behavior of Spaniards and the new Christians as well.⁸⁹ Arguedas was the first to translate in full the myths of the Huarochirí manuscript from Quechua to Spanish and published it in 1966.⁹⁰ Laura León considers that Arguedas' translation of Huarochiri myths exceeds the literal translation because it incorporates the dynamics of social relations that cannot be found in dictionaries and grammars. León asserts that: "In the work of Arguedas, the act of translation? emerges as an intervention on the relationship between past and present, and between a socially marginalized language and another hegemonic."⁹¹ In any case, this experience was fundamental for him; during this process he was immersed in an oral tradition, which he had been familiar since his childhood.

Translating the myths of Huarochirí, Arguedas had the opportunity to recount a millenary oral tradition to modern Peruvian social reality.⁹² The myths of Huarochiri later found expression in Arguedas' last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and The Fox from Down Below*. In

⁸⁸ Gerald Taylor, *Huarochirí: Ritos y Tradiciones* (Lima: IFEA, 2003), 15.

⁸⁹ Enrique Ballón, "El Manuscrito de Huarochirí," in *Antología General de la Prosa en el Perú: Los Orígenes de lo Oral a lo Escrito*, ed. Alberto Escobar (Lima: Ediciones Edubanco, 1986), 62.

⁹⁰ Jose Maria Arguedas, trans. *Dioses y Hombres de Huarochirí: narración Quechua recogida por Francisco de Ávila* (Lima: Museo Nacional de Historia, 1966).

⁹¹ Laura León Llerena, "José María Arguedas, traductor del Manuscrito de Huarochirí," *Cuadernos del CILHA* 13, no 17 (2012):74-89.

⁹² Sara Castro-Klarén, "Como chancho, cuando piensa: el afecto cognitivo en Arguedas y el con-verter animal," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 26 (2001-2002): 25-39.

general, all Arguedas' novels and stories are nourished by oral tradition.⁹³ In the excerpt cited above, we can see that it was the year 1966, when he had just published the translation of the myths and encouraged Alejandro Ortiz to read them, probably because Arguedas considered that in these ancient myths, Peruvians could find some clues to understanding the essence of their own culture. Indeed, Arguedas, after this translation was moved to the point of using the myths to build a bridge between present and past.

In December of 1967, Arguedas wrote Ortiz Rescaniere to continue with his project of the diffusion of Andean Culture:

They are annihilated or trying to annihilate Quechua culture in a planned way and I believe with the help of the pseudo-ethnologists. The work you have to carry out is then not only really interesting, a source of the deepest happiness, but also will seem to be in part heroic and missionary. A bit like what Ávila did, but in reverse.⁹⁴

Arguedas trained Ortiz Rescaniere as his disciple and tried to convey to him his mission of understanding Peruvian social reality. Arguedas knew that no one before him had taken Andean oral tradition seriously and considered that Ortiz Rescaniere had the talent and sensitivity to continue his work.⁹⁵ Here Arguedas contrasts this mission with Ávilas' work, which consisted in the eradication of indigenous' beliefs through the imposition of Catholic preaching. On the contrary, Arguedas', and later Ortiz's, work would consist of the recovery of Andean oral traditions.

⁹³ Enrique Ballón, "El Motivo de los Zorros y la Literatura Formal Peruana," in *Antología General de la Prosa en el Perú: Los Orígenes de lo Oral a lo Escrito*, ed. Alberto Escobar (Lima: Ediciones Edubanco, 1986), 109.

⁹⁴ "A la cultura quechua la están aniquilando o tratando de aniquilar planificadamente y creo que con el propio auxilio de pseudo-etnólogos. El trabajo que tienes que realizar es pues no sólo interesantísimo, fuente de la más grande dicha, sino que tendrá algunos visos de heroico y de misional. Un poco como lo que hizo Ávila, pero al revés". José María Arguedas, Lima, to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, Paris, December 2, 1967, in Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad.*, 243.

⁹⁵ Enrique Cortes, "Writing the Mestizo: Jose Maria Arguedas as Ethnographer," *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* 4, no. 2 (July 2009): 171–89, emphasizes that Arguedas is critical of ethnographers on the basis of their ahistoricism.

But Arguedas' interests were beyond the understanding of Andean culture; he was interested in Peruvian social transformation as a whole and also in the endurance and recreation of Andean culture in the middle of these transformations. In a letter he wrote to Pierre Duviols, a French historian specialized in Peru, Arguedas asserts:

Peru is changing, it's moving quickly, despite the increasingly strong obstacles that those who have made use of usufruct since the Conquest are putting forward. The old Pre-Hispanic and Colonial elements, Europeans who helped us break the Colonial shell, France, especially, are now removed by the massive imposition of the North American. I am terrified facing that avalanche that counts on every conceivable means. My novel [*Todas las Sangres*] is a description of this struggle through the rivalry of two brothers, descendants of former landowners: one aims to preserve by force what he calls "the Catholic purity of the Indian," the other [represents] a mining company and stirs the people up with the invasion of the industrial world. The fundamental battle of both enemies is for the "farm workers" of the hacienda that have been left in the power of the custodian. My aim is to show the main forces that collide, mingle, grow and create the modern Peru.⁹⁶

Here, Arguedas expresses his concern about the influence of North American society not only in countries with colonial origin like Peru, but even in strong European societies as in France. In this excerpt, Arguedas is talking about the main plot of his novel *Todas las Sangres* [All the Bloods], published in 1964. According to Arguedas, this was his most ambitious and beautiful novel.⁹⁷ In it, he tried to represent the social, economic, and racial variety within Peru. At the same time, this novel is about the introduction of capitalism into an Andean town through a mining

⁹⁶ "El Perú cambia, va rápido, a pesar de las trabas cada vez más fuertes que quienes lo usufructúan desde la conquista le ponen delante. Los elementos antiguos, prehispánicos y coloniales, los europeos que nos ayudaron a romper el cascarón colonial: Francia, especialmente, están ahora removidos por la imposición masiva de lo norteamericano. Yo siento pavor ante esa avalancha que cuenta con todos los medios imaginables. Mi novela es una descripción de esta lucha a través de la rivalidad de dos hermanos descendientes de antiguos terratenientes: el uno pretende conservar por la fuerza lo que él llama "la pureza católica del indio", el otro una empresa minera y revuelve el pueblo con la invasión del mundo industrial. La lucha de fondo de ambos enemigos es por los "colonos" de la hacienda que ha quedado en poder del conservador. Mi aspiración es mostrar las fuerzas principales que chocan, se mezclan, crecen y crean el Perú moderno." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pierre Duviols (France), February 9, 1961, Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Itinerarios Epistolares: La Amistad de José María Arguedas y Pierre Duviols en Dieciseis Cartas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2011), 60.

⁹⁷ "Yo creo que *Todas las Sangres* es no sólo más importante que *Los Ríos Profundos*, sino también una novela más hermosa" [I believe that *All the Bloods* is not only more important than *Deep Rivers*, but also a more beautiful novel]. "Conversando con Arguedas" in Juan Larco, *Recopilación de Textos sobre José María Arguedas* (La Habana: Centro de Investigaciones Literarias, 1976), 22.

corporation. One of the protagonists is in favor of the incursion of capitalism and the other is more conservative and believes in retaining the old structure. In the end, neither of these positions prevails, but instead the negotiation between both represented by the mestizo character Rendón Wilka, an embodiment of the mestizaje ideal Arguedas identifies with and celebrates.⁹⁸

With the quickening pace of Peruvian social change in the 1960s, Arguedas faced the problem of embodying emerging national realities whose outlines, meanings, and outcomes were far from certain. Because of Arguedas' interest in broadening his anthropological horizons for understanding Peruvian society, he decided to do ethnographic research in Chimbote, a port on the coast of Ancash, Peru, where people were migrating from the Andes during the 1960s. Later on, this ethnographic work would feed into his last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and The Fox from Down Below*. In a letter to Ortiz Rescaniere on February 20, 1967, Arguedas shared his bewilderment about Chimbote:

Chimbote is a Lima still on a laboratory scale. I am just gathering information about the process of adaptation of the Indian here and I am studying the fishermen for my novel. I was in Puno for ten days, and on my return, I was almost disintegrated because of the violence in which I was attacked by the force of that indefinable humanity of the people from the Altiplano [i.e., the Andean Plateau]. It is almost indescribable; I am left half traumatized; for the first time I am overwhelmed by a message.⁹⁹

He faced the challenge of looking this social change in the face and possibly not seeing his own reflection.

⁹⁸ In an interview, Arguedas admits he identifies with the character Rendón Wilka of *Todas las Sangres* [All the Bloods]. See Juan Larco (comp.), *Recopilación de Textos José María Arguedas* (La Habana: Centro de Investigaciones de las Américas, 1976), 24.

⁹⁹ "Chimbote es una Lima a escala todavía de laboratorio. Estoy informándome sobre el proceso de adaptación del indio aquí y estoy estudiando a los pescadores para mi novela. Estuve 10 días en Puno y, a la vuelta, casi me desintegro a causa de la violencia con que fui atacado por la fuerza de esa humanidad indefinible de los hombres del altiplano. Es casi indescriptible; he quedado medio traumatizado; por primera vez abrumado por un mensaje". José María Arguedas, Chimbote, to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, Paris, Feb. 20, 1967, in Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 223.

Even with this overwhelming emotion Arguedas experienced because of the internal migration in Perú, he still challenged himself to use literature once again as a tool for expressing reality and he was able to finish his last novel in the middle of his own personal agony. *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* was his last offering to Peruvians and at the same time an exhortation to continue the process of comprehending the new Peru that internal migration was producing. In his last novel, Arguedas strove to describe the processes of social transformations, encounters and disencounters between Andean culture and Western culture. In 1967, when he was still in the process of writing *The Fox*, he wrote to Murra:

Chimbote is more than other places an endless universe. As I lack a real training in field work and also a clear theoretical orientation, I often felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem. I believe, however, to have seen some things more or less clearly, for example, the type of relationships or patterns of relationships that have been established between the great mass of peasants that have descended particularly from the highlands of Ancash, Cajamarca and La Libertad, with coastal people. The concept that some have of the others. I was told by the most famous coastal Creole fisherman of Chimbote: “the *serrano* (highlander) is better than the coastal dweller for work; he takes some time to learn what has to be done in the sea, but when he learns he enjoys the work: he works because he likes it; is obedient; keeps going forward; the coastal dweller however, is quite a cheat in work; if he can earn money without doing anything, he does it and enjoys it.”¹⁰⁰

In this letter, Arguedas portrays a typical characterization of Peruvian people from the two regions that, to some extent, has been internalized in Peruvian society. People from the sierra are generally considered more hard-working than people from the coast; but those from the coast are

¹⁰⁰ “Chimbote es más que otros lugares un universo inacabable. Como carezco de un verdadero entrenamiento en el trabajo de campo y, además, de una orientación teórica clara, frecuentemente me sentía abrumado por la magnitud del problema. Creo, sin embargo, haber visto más o menos claras algunas cosas, por ejemplo, el tipo de relaciones o los tipos de relaciones que se han establecido entre la gran masa de campesinos bajados de la sierra de Ancash, de Cajamarca y de Libertad, especialmente, con los costeños. El concepto que unos tienen de los otros. Me decía el pescador criollo costeño más famoso de Chimbote: “el serrano es mejor que el costeño para el trabajo; demora en aprender lo que hay que hacer en el mar, pero cuando aprende le toma gusto al trabajo: trabaja porque le gusta; es obediente; va para adelante; el costeño en cambio, es bien tramposo para el trabajo; si puede ganar la plata sin hacer nada lo hace y lo goza;” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra (USA), March 13, 1967, in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 149-150.

considered more astute and devious than Andean people. Some sociologists like Gonzalo Portocarrero have studied this phenomenon called “la viveza criolla” [creole trickery],¹⁰¹ which implies that people who live in coastal cities, especially in Lima the capital, find the means for gaining advantage of any situation with less effort than normally required. It seems that Arguedas, when comparing these two Peruvians type in the same scenario (the port of Chimbote), realized the contrasting behavior of both.

Yet Arguedas could not separate himself from Peruvian history because he was embedded in it. Not only in his letters but in his diaries one sees the alignment Arguedas created between his life and Peruvian history. On the one hand, his diaries are in great part a narration of his suicidal behavior as well as an effort to keep him alive to be able to write his last novel; and, on the other, they were an attempt to describe the social effervescence produced by internal migration. Here is an excerpt from his “Last Diary?” included in *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*:¹⁰²

Perhaps with me one historical cycle draws to a close and another begins in, with all that this represents. This means the closing of the cycle of the consoling calendra lark, of the whip, of being driven like beasts of burden, of impotent hatred, of mournful funeral “uprisings,” of the fear of God and of the predominance of that God and his protégées, his fabricators. It signifies the opening of the cycle of the light and the indomitable, liberating strength of the Vietnamese man, of the fiery calendra lark, of the liberator God. That God who is coming back into action. Vallejo is the beginning and the end.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Gonzalo Portocarrero, *Los Nuevos Limeños: Sueños, Fervores y Caminos en el Mundo Popular* (Lima: Sur, Tafos, 1993).

¹⁰² His last diary is titled by Arguedas himself using a question mark: “Last Diary?” probably to emphasize the fact that it may be his last diary before committing suicide.

¹⁰³ “Quizá conmigo empieza a cerrarse un ciclo y a abrirse otro en el Perú y lo que él representa: se cierra el de la calandria consoladora, del azote, del arriaje, del odio impotente, de los fúnebres “alzamientos”, del temor a Dios y del predominio de ese Dios y sus protegidos, sus fabricantes; se abre el de la luz y de la fuerza liberadora invencible del hombre de Vietnam, el de la calandria de fuego, el del dios liberador. Aquel se reintegra. Vallejo era el principio y el fin.” José María Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, translated by Frances Horning Barraclough (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 259;

This excerpt demonstrates that Arguedas considers himself a milestone in Peruvian history amid crises threatening social disintegration.

We should remember that Arguedas' diaries were intentionally written to be read and to be part of his last novel. In this excerpt he constructed himself within a historical context. The diaries of *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* were written in the late 60s. This was the time of the triumph of the Cuban revolution and the difficulties of American troops trying to win the Vietnam War.¹⁰⁴ Even though, formally, Arguedas never belonged to a political party, he shared the ideals of communism, and these historical events gave him hope that a change for a more equal society was possible. We should remember also that he wrote this diary having the idea of suicide in his mind, therefore, the initial words of the excerpt: "Perhaps with me one historical cycle draws to a close and another begins in Peru ...," implying that, from his point of view, his death would have a special meaning for his country's history. With these words he transformed his suicide into a symbolic breaking point for Peruvian society. The "new cycle" would leave behind the period of indigenous exploitation and would bring a period of liberation at the same time as liberation was arriving in Vietnam. A just but vengeful providential God is emphasized here because Arguedas is aware of the close relation between the Catholic religion and Spanish domination in Peru since colonial times. Priests played an important role in the subjection of indigenous people who remained fearful of the new Christian God, but now that God takes on the role of liberator of those people. Arguedas himself, as most Andean children, grew up under the influence of conservative Catholicism. However, in his last years he met a new group of

¹⁰⁴ Arguedas wrote his last novel during the last two years of his life (1968 to 1969). The Tet Offensive was launched on January 30 of 1968 by forces of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army against South Vietnam, the United States, and their allies. This event was the beginning of American defeat.

Catholic priests, those who belonged to what later would be called Liberation Theology.¹⁰⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, founder of Liberation Theology, considers that these two cycles – alluded to in Arguedas’ diary – are still alive in Peru and that the beginning of the second period does not signify – yet – the end of the first. Arguedas’ words in this excerpt– for Gutiérrez – are not only an announcement but an incipient realization filled with the future.¹⁰⁶ Arguedas met Gustavo Gutiérrez and addresses him in his “Last Diary?” in *The Fox*.¹⁰⁷

God is constantly mentioned in Arguedas’ writing also because – as Washington Delgado asserts – Arguedas is a religious writer, understanding “religious” not as belonging to any religion or believing in an specific God, but in having the inner belief in something marvelous and superior to any human creation. Indeed, Delgado recalls Arguedas’ telling about a story of his trip to Germany and finding himself contemplating the Rhine river: “Look at all that mankind has done to remove the face of God this river has to no avail; it still has the image of a god, even though I do not believe in God.”¹⁰⁸ Washington Delgado says that these words show him as a religious man, similar to César Vallejo, who he also considers a religious writer. Coincidentally, Vallejo, probably the most well-known Peruvian poet in the international arena, is mentioned in Arguedas’ “Last

¹⁰⁵ The essence of “theology of liberation” is to create an option for the poor. It was originated in 1969 during a meeting of the Roman Catholic/WCC joint committee on Society, Development and Peace, where two theologians, the Peruvian Catholic priest, Gustavo Gutierrez and the Brazilian Presbyterian Ruben Alves had presentations that afterwards resulted in two books: *Teologia de la Liberacion: perspectivas* (1971), by Gutierrez and *Cristianismo: ¿opio o liberacion?* (1971) by Alves. Both works constituted a new approach to theology in Latin America that it would be called “Theology of Liberation.” John Parrat, ed. *Introduction to Third World Theologies* (West Nyack, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 31-32.

¹⁰⁶ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Entre las Calandrias. Un Ensayo sobre José María Arguedas* (Lima: Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas, 2011), 6.

¹⁰⁷ “Does what we know amount to much less than the great hope we feel, Gustavo? Can you say that—you, the theologian of the Liberator God...?” “¿Es mucho menos lo que sabemos que la gran esperanza que sentimos, Gustavo? ¿Puedes decirlo tú, el teólogo del Dios liberador ...?” in Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, 258.

¹⁰⁸ “Fíjate todo lo que el hombre ha hecho para quitarle la cara de Dios que tiene este río y no lo ha conseguido; sigue teniendo la imagen de un dios, y eso que yo no creo en Dios” Washington Delgado, Prologue in *Entre las Calandrias*, XIV-XV.

Diary?” showing that he encountered profound connections with Vallejo. It is through Vallejo that Peruvian consciousness changed on many levels: linguistic, sociological, rephrase so that they are adjectival words or phrases, like “linguistic” historical memory, and human sensitivity.¹⁰⁹ Arguedas intends to suggest that, similar to Vallejo, he would provoke another change in Peruvian consciousness and, to some extent, he did. Today, Arguedas is a cultural hero; in contrast to other Peruvian writers, common people – especially from the Andean region – feel an identification with him.

Arguedas mentioned Vallejo in his “Last Diary?” using an ambitious but absolute definition: “Vallejo is the beginning and the end.”¹¹⁰ He found in Vallejo’s poems cues to understanding not only Peruvian society but the human essence of solidarity towards the oppressed. To have an idea of Vallejo’s language and how this fits perfectly with Arguedas’ sensitivity, let us take a look at one of Vallejo’s poems, “I Am Going to Speak of Hope,” which starts by saying:

I do not suffer this pain as César Vallejo. I do not ache now as an artist, as a man or even as a simple living being. I do not suffer this pain as a Catholic, as a Mohammedan or as an atheist. Today I simply suffer. If my name were not César Vallejo, I would still suffer the very same pain. If I were not an artist, I would still suffer it. If I were not a man or even a living being, I would still suffer it. If I were not a Catholic, atheist, or Mohammedan, I would still suffer it. Today I suffer from further below. Today I simply suffer.¹¹¹

Arguedas shared with Vallejo the same compassionate vision of the world, which he explores in an article he wrote for the newspaper *La Prensa* on May 26 of 1946:

¹⁰⁹ “The Peruvian poet César Vallejo (1892-1938) is an enigmatic figure. He has been at the center of some fiercest literary debates in Latin America. To this day, scholars argue over the meaning of his work, his politics, his religion, even what the weather was like during his funeral. He was not particularly famous during his lifetime, but he became enormously famous after his death-to such and extent that there are many who argue he is Latin America's most important poet.” Stephen M. Hart, *Cesar Vallejo a Literary Biography* (New York: Tamesis, 2013), ix.

¹¹⁰ Arguedas, *The fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, 259.

¹¹¹ Clayton Eshleman, translator, *The Complete Poetry, César Vallejo, A Bilingual Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 343.

I believe that those who assert that Vallejo is a new and aboriginal source of American literature do not exaggerate. The ideal of converting the man-creator of this earth into a man who contemplates his homeland and extracts its substance, but with a high consciousness; he realized it for the first time and with the fullness of he who founded it. New in his language, in his doctrine, and in the worlds he bequeathed.¹¹²

His identification with Vallejo is clear; a true creator was for Arguedas a man capable of “extracting” the essence of his people, his homeland. Vallejo was one of those creators; Arguedas, too. We must understand the verb “to extract” here as a metaphor that refers to the capacity of getting the essence from things through language and not being satisfied with superficiality.

It is for his admiration towards the poet that Arguedas was also concerned about teaching values among young students using Vallejo’s work as a tool to accomplish this purpose.

In a letter to Moreno Jimeno, he writes:

And now I will give you some interesting news: I have given a special class on Vallejo in all sections of the School. I told them about Vallejo’s life, quite long, about all his works, about his struggles, and this in detail. (...) The boys know now exactly who Vallejo was, and I’m sure they love him.¹¹³

Arguedas’ belief in the embodiment of the nation was linked with his mission of preparing new generations. Thus, besides his interest in literary creation and anthropological research, he was concerned about young people, and what kind of ideals they held. He left some manuscripts to his brother, Arístides, written during early April 1966, in which we find interesting appreciations about Peruvian youth and the future of the country. For example, Arguedas says:

¹¹² “Creo que no exageran los que afirman que Vallejo es una fuente nueva y aborigen de la literatura americana. El ideal de convertir al hombre creador de esta tierra en un señor que contempla su patria y extrae su jugo, pero con una alta conciencia, lo realizó él por primera vez y con la plenitud del que funda. Nuevo en su lenguaje, en su doctrina y en los mundos que legó.” In Roland Forgues, *La Letra Inmortal*, 28.

¹¹³ “Y ahora te daré algunas noticias interesantes: he dado una clase especial, en todas las secciones del Colegio, sobre Vallejo. Les hablé de la vida de Vallejo, bastante largo, de todos sus trabajos, de sus luchas, y de esto en detalle. (...) Los muchachos saben ahora, perfectamente quien fue Vallejo, y estoy seguro que lo quieren.” José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú, to Manuel Moreno Jimeno, November 11, 1940, in Forgues, *La letra inmortal*, 96.

I see some youth are desperate, maybe without powerful national models to orient them and with a terrible international confusion. But Peru is there. Do not tell me I am narrow in understanding and ideals.¹¹⁴

When he says “Peru is there,” he means that his country has the potential to enrich youths’ aspirations, but that it is necessary to have appropriate leaders who have the talent for recognizing and using Peru’s rich cultural background. Arguedas himself felt this mission of giving young Peruvians the opportunity to know the cultural richness of Peru through his literature.

This task Arguedas imposed on himself to help connect Peruvians as is shown in a letter he wrote to Hugo Blanco, a leftist activist that Arguedas never met in person but identified with his political ideals:

I, brother, only cry tears of fire; but with that fire I have purified something in the head and heart of Lima, the great city that denied, that did not know its father and mother well; I opened her eyes a bit; the very eyes of the people of our town I cleaned a bit so they see us better. And among the people who are called foreigners, I think I raised up our true image, its worth, its true worth, I think I raised it up high and with enough light for them to value us, so they know and can expect our company and strength; so they do not take pity on us like the most orphaned of orphans, so that no one feels shame for any of us.¹¹⁵

At the time Arguedas wrote this letter, Hugo Blanco was in prison. The few emotive letters Arguedas wrote to him are considered by some people (including Arguedas’ second wife) a sample of Arguedas’ political ideals.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ “Veo a la juventud algo desesperada, quizás sin modelos nacionales poderosos que los orienten y con una confusión internacional terrible. Pero ahí está el Perú. Que no me llamen estrecho de entendimiento e ideales.” in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 264.

¹¹⁵ “Yo, hermano, sólo se llorar lágrimas de fuego; pero con ese fuego he purificado algo la cabeza y el corazón de Lima, la gran ciudad que negaba, que no conocía bien a su padre y a su madre; le abrí un poco los ojos; los propios ojos de los hombres de nuestro pueblo les limpié un poco para que nos vean mejor. Y en los pueblos que llaman extranjeros creo que levanté nuestra imagen verdadera, su valer, su valer verdadero, creo que lo levanté alto y con luz suficiente para que nos estimen, para que sepan y puedan esperar nuestra compañía y fuerza; para que no se apiaden de nosotros como del más huérfano de los huérfanos; para que no sienta vergüenza de nosotros nadie.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Hugo Blanco, Lima, Perú, (no date, 1969) in Forgues, *La Letra Inmortal*, 54.

¹¹⁶ “Just read the letters to Hugo Blanco to understand that José María was mainly political; try to depoliticize it is trying to erase his own image.” “Basta leer las cartas a Hugo Blanco para entender que José María era fundamentalmente político; tratar de despolitizarlo es tratar de borrar su propia imagen.” Sybila Arredondo,

However, we should consider these letters with caution. After the victory of the Cuban Revolution, there existed a political atmosphere in all of Latin America that encouraged the possibility of a change in other countries. Besides, before his suicide in December of 1969, Arguedas was especially sensitive and his language was particularly intense and expressive. In this excerpt, Arguedas is saying that he accomplished his mission of making Andean people visible and respected vis á vis the people of Lima, the capital, and all other foreigners. Even though he did not mention the “Andean” word in this excerpt, it is implicit. He is affirming that after him there should not be any reason why someone in the city feels ashamed of or pity for Andean people. We can see that he includes himself among these people who were “denied.” It is interesting that he implies not only that foreigners were blind to Andean people, but, “our own people” from Peru, who did not have enough information and underestimated their own Andean population.

The burdens of national embodiment weighed upon Arguedas. Writing was a difficult process in his last year but still he felt a responsibility to the Peruvian nation. He believed that he should complete, even though feeling exhausted, his mission of connecting Peruvians with one another but he could not continue this work due to the decay of his mental illness. In a letter to Lola Hofmann, his psychoanalyst, he writes in July of 1969:

I’ve always been desperate at being holed up and unable to work. I feel a tremendous tightness in the neck. And so I am helpless, as if I was devouring myself. But I must overcome this trance; on the name of my people, in correspondence to the tenacious, wise and generous help I have received from you.¹¹⁷

interview by Maruja Barrig in *Runa Revista del Instituto Nacional de Cultura*, 6 (Noviembre-Diciembre de 1977): 15.

¹¹⁷ “Siempre me ha causado desesperación el encierro con imposibilidad de trabajar. Tengo una tremenda opresión a la nuca. Y así estoy inerme, algo como devorándome a mí mismo. Pero debo salir de este trance; en nombre de mi pueblo, en correspondencia a la tenaz, sabia y generosa ayuda que de usted he recibido.” José María Arguedas to Lola Hofmann, July, 17, 1969, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 215.

But finally, even though he felt emotionally devastated, Arguedas was proud of his life and of being able to reveal the hidden Andean world of Peru, an important part of the Peruvian identity:

With the truncated novel in my mind and in all my nature I cannot give classes or research, but here as well I cannot conclude nor finish the novel. Now it is not possible for me to back to you in Chile either. I'm doomed. But I have made a complete, pure, fruitful, exemplary life; I have revealed a world that I see now, almost like a tiny ancient god, I see it developing, irrepressible, generous and resplendent. The two of us have done it, Lola, the large part: All the Bloods [Todas las Sangres] and Men and Gods of Huarochirí [Dioses y Hombres de Huarochiri], discovered a real universe to Peru and America.¹¹⁸

This letter was written two months before Arguedas committed suicide, so it is significant that he expresses satisfaction with his achievements as well as gratitude to his psychoanalyst for helping him finish his most important work. The two pieces mentioned here, the novel *Todas las Sangres* and *The Myths of Huarochirí*, constitute for Arguedas symbols representing Peruvian society. The novel was the contemporary portrayal of the Peru of that time (1960s) while the myths are roots where Peruvians (and America as a whole) should search for its origins and they also helped Arguedas to interweave the stories in his last novel.

In this chapter, we have seen how Arguedas portrays his embodiment of the nation through his letters. This embodiment implies keeping alive inside himself the history of the country—embedded in Andean mythology and culture, Inka empire, colonial and republic times—and the intersections, encounters and des-encounters of different social classes and races (indigenous, white, and mestizo) in one person. Constituting himself as a bridge that connected

¹¹⁸ “Con la novela trunca en mi mente y en toda mi naturaleza yo no puedo dictar clases ni investigar, pero aquí tampoco puedo concluir o terminar la novela. Ya no me es posible tampoco volver donde Ud. a Chile. Estoy condenado. Pero he hecho una vida completa, pura, fecunda, ejemplar; he revelado un mundo que veo ahora, casi como un dios pequeñito antiguo, lo veo desarrollarse, incontenible, generoso y resplandeciente. Lo hemos hecho los dos, Lola, la gran parte: Todas las Sangres y Hombres y Dioses de Huarochiri, descubrieron al Perú y América un verdadero universo.” José María Arguedas, Lunahuaná, Peru, to Lola Hofmann (Chile), September 16, 1969, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 235.

the historical transformation of Peruvian society, he assumed a messianic role and positioned him as a chiasm that is the point of encounter of different phases of the transformation of Peruvian society.

2.3 CHAPTER 3: AUTHORIAL SELF

In this chapter I analyze how Arguedas portrayed himself as an author in his letters. In first place, I explore how Arguedas considers his condition as intellectual and writer that moves between literature and anthropology. Arguedas was looking for a new literary style that gave importance to the content versus the style, acknowledging the intimate relation between fiction and reality in his literary work. Secondly, I will address his relation with other writers and editors. Finally, I analyze how his political commitments are shown in the letters. We should take into account that throughout his authorial self-portrait in the letters, the writer changes his perspectives through time; therefore, sometimes he seems to be contradictory. Nevertheless, we can see one man behind the changes and contradictions.

2.3.1 His condition as intellectual and writer

Arguedas describes himself as a creative man who enjoyed the lonely process of artistic creation. One of the things that it is noticeable in this portrayal is that he valued study for the acquisition of knowledge. When, in 1959, he writes to his brother about an ethnological research he was doing in Huancayo, Arguedas states in his letter that “the true man of study is not satisfied with little; he only dares to reach a conclusion when he has exhausted the sources of

information.”¹¹⁹ Even though in this excerpt he is referring to anthropological research and he never doubts of his capacity as a social scientist, his passion, however, was creative writing, where he considered himself to be more talented. In the same letter, he says to his brother:

You must maintain before your friends that when it relates to sociology or ethnology I am not an authority on the subject; in these fields I am a mid-level worker. The same does not apply in regard to storytelling, on which without any doubt I have some outstanding qualities.¹²⁰

We can see that Arguedas does not admit his achievements in anthropological research though he was a solid and original social scientist. Indeed, the Peruvian anthropologist Rodrigo Montoya considers that “Arguedian anthropology is committed to the country; it is an anthropology that is reasoning with Peru and is articulating its fervor.”¹²¹ However, professionally, he prefers to fashion himself proudly as a creative writer. Thus, in a letter to his friend Emilio Westphalen, Arguedas expresses his difficulty in pursuing anthropological research, while feeling more comfortable in a creative process:

I hope that this crisis will come to pass as almost groundless as it intensifies. If not I could not get rid of the work on [the] communities of Castile and Peru, which I have begun, that will be the last thing I do in ethnology, thank God. These projects captivate me, but it kills me to write them, because of my lack of order and good professional training. While the stories once they are conceived come out quietly.¹²²

¹¹⁹ “El verdadero hombre de estudio no se satisface con poco; solo se anima a establecer una conclusión cuando ha agotado las fuentes de información.” José María Arguedas, Puerto Supe, Peru, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Peru, Dec. 10, 1959, in Carmen Maria Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la PUCP, 1999), 254.

¹²⁰ “Debes sostener ante tus amigos que no soy una autoridad en la materia, cuando se trata de sociología o etnología; que en esos campos soy un trabajador de nivel medio. No ocurre lo mismo en lo que se refiere al relato en lo que sin duda tengo algunas cualidades sobresalientes.” José María Arguedas, Puerto Supe, Peru to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Peru, Dec. 10, 1959, in Pinilla, *Arguedas en Familia*, 254-55.

¹²¹ “la antropología arguediana está comprometida con el país, es una antropología que está razonando con el Perú y que está articulando sus hervores...” Rodrigo Montoya, oral interview by author, Lima, Peru, July 14, 2010.

¹²² “Espero que la crisis ésta se me pase casi tan inmotivadamente como se agudiza. Si no no podré librarme del trabajo sobre comunidades de Castilla y el Perú, que he empezado, que será lo último que haga en etnología, a Dios gracias. Estos proyectos me cautivan pero me martiriza el escribirlos, por mi falta de orden y de buena formación profesional. Mientras que los relatos cuando están ya concebidos salen tranquilamente.” José María Arguedas, Supe,

Here Arguedas refers to the research he did in Spain, where he compared social interactions in rural communities from Spain and Peru, concluding that what we usually associated with Peruvian indigenous communal cooperative interactions were similar to Spanish communities' interactions in rural areas, probably inherited from colonial times.¹²³

Moving between anthropology and literature, it is not unusual that he would compare his production in both disciplines. In a letter to his brother, Arguedas expresses his surprise when his dissertation in ethnology won a competition; while on the contrary, one of his novels did not:

I accepted submitting my thesis to the competition when I was in Spain, because I wanted to know if things in our country would come to the level that they will deny the novel prize to a novelist, but would give it [to him] for scientific research. And so it has been. There was something very curious about it. My thesis was submitted by a friend when I was away. And it has won the award. So it seems that decisions among people dedicated to science are much more honest than in the field of letters.¹²⁴

His dissertation for getting the bachelor's degree in Anthropology, titled: "Evolución de las comunidades indígenas. El valle del Mantaro y la ciudad de Huancayo: un caso de fusión de culturas no comprometida por la acción de las instituciones de origen colonial" [Evolution of Indigenous Communities. Mantaro Valley and the City of Huancayo: A case of cultural fusion not committed with institutional action from colonial origin.] won a national competition. However,

Perú, to Emilio Westphalen, March 19, 1959, in Inés Westphalen Ortiz, *El Rio y El Mar. Correspondencia José María Arguedas/Emilio Adolfo Westphalen* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011), 201-202.

¹²³ José María Arguedas, "Las Comunidades de Castilla y el Perú, Estructura Social del Grupo: Cooperación, dos Economías, dos Mundos," *Revista del Museo Nacional* 32 (1963): 81-88.

¹²⁴ "Acepté que se presentara al concurso mi tesis, cuando estuve en España, porque deseaba saber si las cosas en nuestro país llegarían al colmo de que a un novelista se le negara el premio de la novela y se le diera, en cambio el de investigación científica. Y así ha sido. Se ha producido algo muy curioso. Mi tesis fue presentada por un amigo, cuando yo estaba ausente. Y ha obtenido el premio. Tal parece que las decisiones entre gente que se dedica a la ciencia son mucho más honestas que en el campo de las letras." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Peru, December 10, 1959, in Pinilla, *Arguedas en Familia*, 252-253.

when he submitted his novel “Diamantes y Pedernales” to the “Fomento a la Cultura Ricardo Palma” national competition, the prize was not awarded. Arguedas thought this fact was totally unfair and made only with the purpose of damaging him.¹²⁵ His disappointment when he was not given the literary prize shows the confidence he had on his literary work. He believed he deserved the prize, and probably he did. In any case, he did not receive any convincing explanation.

Arguedas considered literature as a tool for expressing what was happening in reality. There was no separation between literature and reality for him. Establishing a relation between literature and anthropology, fiction and reality, he is anticipating James Clifford and George E. Marcus’s approach, who in their book, published in 1985, assert that “Literary approaches have recently enjoyed some popularity in the human sciences.”¹²⁶

He gives testimony on his belief that his fictional work was nourished by reality in a literary encounter in 1965, where he defended his position in front of other writers by saying:

When I reread with fear the few things I have written, I have had the conviction, the indefinable joy of knowing that what I have said is absolutely the truth, there is not a bit of a lie, it is the truth. I can prove it is the truth, in spite of, as in the case of *Ciro*, many of the characters described in his novels were entirely created or almost created, as in the case, for example, of Don Bruno and Rendón Wilka in *Todas las Sangres* [All the bloods]. (...). Reality is the source of creation. The more a man has had contact with reality, his work will be much more the expression of what a man is; and to describe a man from anywhere in the world, by chance, you are describing the universal man.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ See Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 252-253.

¹²⁶ James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics and Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 3.

¹²⁷ “Cuando he releído con temor las pocas cosas que he escrito, he tenido la convicción, la felicidad indefinible de saber que eso que he dicho es absolutamente la verdad, no hay allí un ápice de mentira, es la verdad. Yo puedo demostrar que es la verdad, a pesar que, como en el caso de *Ciro*, muchos de los personajes descritos en sus novelas fueron totalmente creados o casi creados, como en el caso, por ejemplo de don Bruno y de Rendón Wilka en *Todas las Sangres*. (...). La realidad es la fuente de la creación. Cuanto más contacto haya tenido el hombre con la realidad, su obra será mucho más expresión de lo que es el hombre, y al describir un hombre de cualquier parte del mundo, por ventura, se está describiendo al hombre universal.” *Primer encuentro de Narradores Peruanos-Arequipa 1965* (Lima: Casa de la Cultura, 1969), 109-110.

In this excerpt, Arguedas is differentiating himself from the literary Style of Ciro Alegría¹²⁸, who –according to Arguedas—created fictional characters not based in reality as he did. It would be difficult to say what the writer means by “reality” because Arguedas usually draws upon his intuition and non-academic arguments. In any case, his concern for truth and universalism, the conflation of experience, reality, and truth, and his apparent emphasis of the nomothetic over the ideographic situate himself as a modernist. I have not found in his letters a direct reference about the influence structuralist anthropology had in his work; however, he was aware of the importance of the contributions of Claude Levi-Strauss to the field and sent to his disciple and friend, Alejandro Ortiz, to pursue a doctoral degree in France under the supervision of Levi-Strauss in order to prepare him to apply these new theories and tendencies of structuralist anthropology to Peruvian reality. Nevertheless, in one of his letters to Alejandro Ortiz, Arguedas mentions that Ortiz considered himself to be more a disciple of Arguedas than of Levi Strauss.¹²⁹ Using Erich Auerbach, we may say that Arguedas, is similar to Auerbach in his famous book *Mimesis*, which is concerned about reality representation in literature. In his book, Auerbach establishes that both main influences in western culture, Homeric and the Old Testament traditions, have also received foreign influences that have determined the representation of reality in European literature.¹³⁰ Arguedas, from a different standing point (Andean mythology and Peruvian social reality) is attentive to reality representation in literature and his claim of truth suggests his

¹²⁸ Ciro Alegría (1909-1967) was a Peruvian writer who belonged to the *Indigenista* movement of early twenty century. He portrayed the indigenous culture of the north of Perú, where people do not speak Quechua. His main novels are “La Serpiente de Oro” [The Golden Serpent] and “El Mundo es Ancho y Ajeno” [The World y Wide and Strange].

¹²⁹ José María Arguedas, Santiago, Chile, to Alejandro Ortiz, Paris, France, March 3, 1969, Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas, Recuerdos de una Amistad* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 281-282.

¹³⁰ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 23.

authorial motivation. The paradox here is that when claiming truth in literature representation, he is claiming to be the bearer of that truth inscribing his vision of the world for his readers but defers from owning it fully.

Even though Arguedas considers experience to be very important for his representation of truth and reality in his literary work, still experience could require a long processing time before he would be able to write about it; nevertheless, once he started writing, the process flowed naturally. Thus, in one of his letters to John Murra, the aforementioned American anthropologist and friend, Arguedas explains that his creative process might take years to decant in his mind, but finally he was able to write a story in little time:

‘The Agony of Rasu Ñiti.’ I am happy with this story because it was maturing for about eight years and I wrote it in two days. I will send you a copy. It only has 11 pages. ‘Rasu Ñiti’ was a legendary dancer from Puquio.¹³¹

We could argue that Arguedas, describing himself as writing a novel in few days, is claiming a kind of automatic writing in the tradition of Jack Kerouac, William Blake, André Breton, William James, and Gertrude Stein.¹³² However, it may be that he uses mnemonics of experience as a strategy to decant his process of literary creation. In any case, not having evidence of how Arguedas thought through his literary gestation process, it is difficult to say how automatic his writing was.

¹³¹ “La agonía de Rasu Ñiti”. Estoy feliz con ese relato porque lo venía madurando desde hace unos ocho años y lo escribí en dos días. Te enviaré una copia. Tiene sólo 11 páginas. “Rasu Ñiti” era un bailarín legendario de Puquio.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra, USA, Nov. 12, 1961 in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 66.

¹³² This concept of automatic writing is described in Alex Albright’s essay, “Ammons, Kerouac, and Their New Romantic Scrolls,” in Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, ed. Harold Bloom (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 115-140. In this essay, automatic writing is related to jazz improvisation: “Kerouac’s ‘procedure’, the second essential, recommends writing with the undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret idea-words, blowing (as per jazz musician) on subject image” (p.123).

Besides his creative writing process, it is possible to trace in his letters his conception of an intellectual. The emphasis that he makes in denying that he is an intellectual is notable. From the time he was a young man of twenty six, he confessed to his older brother, Arístides:

I wish to be completely free, to go anywhere without any kind of responsibility. I am tired of city life; besides, I profoundly hate the intellectual life that I am living; I do not want to be an intellectual in any way; soon I will get out of here, to live for sure the life of the townspeople.¹³³

This letter was written in 1937. The typical life style of an intellectual at this time implied to be involved not only in academic life but also in political movements, which ideologically were still influenced by modern nationalism and positivism.¹³⁴ Even though this excerpt expresses Arguedas' sensation of not fitting well in intellectual life, later on he constituted himself as a new type of intellectual, the *hybrid intellectual*, who according to Lambright is the one who "begins the task of unraveling the? dominant discourse on the nation and proposing alternative ways of understanding, and being in, Peru."¹³⁵ Besides the connotations for an "intellectual life" implied in this passage, Arguedas portrays himself as a free spirit. When continue reading this letter we realize that what he refers as being 'free' means, in this specific case, the fact that he did not want to get engaged yet with any woman because he believed he still had too much to experience in life

¹³³ "deseo ser absolutamente libre, irme a cualquier parte sin responsabilidad de ninguna clase. Yo estoy cansado de la vida de la ciudad; además odio profundamente la vida de intelectual que estoy llevando; yo no quiero ser de ninguna manera un intelectual; muy pronto me largaré por ahí, a vivir, a vivir ciertamente la vida del pueblo." José María Arguedas, Lima, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Peru, no date (probably 1937), in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 138.

¹³⁴ "Positivism influenced differently the two intellectual groups that ultimately evolved [in Peru of early 20th Century]: the literary or left intellectuals and lawyers and the scholars. (...). Nevertheless, they all shared a deep concern for nationality, and they emerged as the most important generations of Peruvian intellectuals in the entire republican period: the "Generation of 1919." Their social, political, economic, and cultural propositions provided the basic assumptions of modern Peruvian nationalism." Jesús Chavarría, "The Intellectuals and the Crisis of Modern Peruvian Nationalism: 1870-1919," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 50, no. 2 (May 1970): 257-78, quote in page 259.

¹³⁵ Anne Lambright, *Creating the Hybrid Intellectual: Subject, Space, and the Feminine in the Narrative of Jose Maria Arguedas* (Cranbury, N.J.: Rosemount, 2007), 10.

and then to write about it. At that time he was living with a leftist activist woman named Adela, but the option of married life, and even intellectual life, imposed certain restrictions on young people like him, who found it difficult to accept its rigidity. It was a time in which Arguedas had many high expectations about his future, yet later experiences such as his being jailed between 1937 and 1938 and several other frustrating events while he was working for the government, diminished many of his initial dreams of freedom. Following the distinctions Ofelia Schuette discusses between personal, social, and national liberation in Latin America, we could say that in this letter Arguedas is talking more about his personal liberation.¹³⁶ In any case what remained fixed within him was his intense relationship with creative writing.

His concept of creative writing also shows up in his letters. In a letter to José Ortiz, Arguedas offers a definition of a writer: “A writer is he who has felt in the most intimate part of his life something of the great pains and miseries of his time, and has enough of a capacity of expression to interpret them.”¹³⁷ This definition of a writer describes Arguedas’ central conviction about his profession. For him, literary writing should not be simply fiction but a possible avenue for understanding pain and miseries of human beings. While he was a teenager, Arguedas read Victor Hugo’s novel, *Le Miserables*, which had a great impact on him, as he states in a letter he wrote to Angel Flores, director of the journal *Americas* of OAS:

¹³⁶ “The notion of personal liberation, in the sense of self-development for a life of freedom and creativity, is the outcome of Western humanist thought (...) Social liberation refers to the need to liberate individuals from structures of social oppression, particularly those that create or reproduce inequities due to economic class, sex, race, context of Latin American social reality are the poor, women, indigenous people, blacks, peasants, and workers. Social liberation needs to be distinguished from national liberation, which, in the context of leftist politics, is often taken to mean a “second” or “definitive” independence for Latin American peoples in relation to Western imperialism or neocolonialism.” Ofelia Schuette, “Social Liberation, Identity, and the Recovery of Early Marxist Thoughts: Preliminary Observations.” In: <http://www.sunypress.edu/pdf/52620.pdf>, 9-10.

¹³⁷ “El escritor es el que ha sentido en lo más íntimo de su vida algo de los grandes dolores y las desdichas de su tiempo, y tiene la capacidad de expresión suficiente para interpretarlos.” In Ortiz Rescaniere, ed. *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad.*, 73.

The first book that moved me, revealing to me the power of literature was “Les Miserables” by Victor Hugo. (...). It was in 1925; I was 14 years old. Every hour in the middle of the reading, I went out to sunbathing and to breath into the garden. (...). Twice I felt I could not resist the emotion that caused me the story; I felt that my heart stopped. I think that since then I conceived the illusion of writing stories.¹³⁸

Arguedas shared with the French author the conception of ‘miserable,’ a social condition that could be changed. Indeed, it was Victor Hugo who differentiated “between the ‘sufferance’ (suffering) that is a part of divine law and can never be eradicated and the misère (poverty) that is social.”¹³⁹ Besides his empathy for the miserable, Arguedas wanted to represent reality through fiction. The debate about the relation between reality and fiction is a philosophical debate that has several approaches. One of them is Rebuschi and Renauld’s approach, who using Quine’s concept of ontological indispensability of truth, a certain kind of indispensability of truth in fiction.¹⁴⁰

Creative writing was Arguedas’s passion; once he became involved in the creative process, nothing could stop him. In a recording addressed to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, his disciple and son of his friend José Ortiz Reyes, in December, 1967, Arguedas says:

I think I told you sometime that when one starts to write, when one begins to write, worlds begin to sprout and one doesn’t become other than a kind of medium [,] in an intermediary of true universes and they start to come up out from one’s body, in the strangest way. Then I have tied together this morning, or I believe I have tied together all those wonderful scattered stories, it seems to me, that maybe could show the Peru of today that is tremendous, so mixed, so boiling.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ “El primer libro que me conmovió, revelándome el poder de la literatura fue “Los miserables” de Victor Hugo. (...). Fue en 1925; yo tenía 14 años. Cada hora, en plena lectura, salía a tomar sol y a respirar hasta la huerta. (...). En dos oportunidades sentí que no podía resistir la emoción que me causaba el relato; me parecía que el corazón se me detenía. Yo creo que desde aquellos días concebí la ilusión de escribir relatos.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Angel Flores, New York, United States, November, 23, 1955, in Carmen María Pinilla, ed. *Apuntes Inéditos: Celia y Alicia en la Vida de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2007), 169.

¹³⁹ Deborah Jenson, *Trauma and Its Representations: The Social Life of Mimesis in Post-Revolutionary France* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 181-2.

¹⁴⁰ See Manuel Rebuschi and Marion Renauld, “Form, Indispensability, and Truths,” in *Truth in Fiction*, ed. Frank Lihoreau (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2011), 245-86.

¹⁴¹ “Yo creo que alguna vez te dije que cuando se empieza a escribir, cuando uno empieza a escribir, comienzan a brotar los mundos y uno no se convierte sino en un especie de médium en intermediario de verdaderos universos y van saliendo del cuerpo de uno, de la manera más extraña. Entonces yo he enlazado esta mañana, o creo haber

In this excerpt he is using two pronouns, the universal didactic “one,” which changes to the personal “I” at the end of the passage. This gives the impression that when explaining the process of writing, Arguedas first gives a general explanation of the process of writing, but soon it gets more involved and takes it personally. Describing the writer as a medium, he reinforces his proximity to automatic writing, but the fact he describes his writing as being somatic (“true universes and they start to come up out from one’s body”), portrays a writer that leaves rationality aside and flows with his emotions. We may relate this with his youthful pretensions of not wanting to be an intellectual, maybe because, as Pedro Lastra asserts, his soul is more the soul of a poet.¹⁴²

Even though Arguedas was very productive in several areas (anthropology, education, literature, and as cultural promoter), there are several moments where he expresses that his true vocation is creative writing, as he says to his friend John Murra:

You know my true vocation and profession is storytelling and in this, yes, I’ve given something original and maybe permanent. My biggest dream was to write this perfectly well conceived novel; but perhaps because of my ill health I never got to write it; and this is my greatest torment.¹⁴³

Mario Vargas Llosa, Peruvian writer and Nobel Prize of literature, in his book *Letters to a Young Novelist*,¹⁴⁴ talks about literary vocation, but his approach differs from Arguedas, who has

enlazado todas esas historias dispersas, formidables, a mí me parece, quizá se pueda mostrar el Perú de hoy que es formidable, tan mezclado, tan hirviente,” Transcription of a recorded message sent by José María Arguedas to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere on December, 1967, when Alejandro Ortiz was in Paris studying for his PhD in Anthropology. In Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 251.

¹⁴² Pedro Lastra, oral interview by author, Lima, Peru, April 24, 2014.

¹⁴³ “Usted sabe que mi verdadera vocación y oficio es la narración y en ella sí he dado algo original y acaso permanente. Mi ilusión mayor era escribir esta novela perfectamente bien concebida; pero acaso dada mi mala salud nunca llegué a escribir; y este es mi mayor tormento.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to John Murra, April 10, 1960, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 33.

¹⁴⁴ Mario Vargas Llosa, *Letters to a Young Novelist*, trans. Natasha Wimmer (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2002).

a more intense, visceral approach. Vargas Llosa describes himself as more rational and disciplined in his creative process. Then, he would fit better with the category of “professional writer” that Arguedas gives in the *First Diary* of his last novel, not identifying himself with this category.¹⁴⁵ The excerpt above was written in 1960, when Arguedas had not yet written *Todas las Sangres* [All the Bloods], which, as mentioned before, he considered his best novel. His “bad health” refers to his mental health, a constant battle against which he had to fight. In this excerpt he shows his ambition of writing a “perfectly conceived novel.” We could say that he did eventually write this novel because *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, even though it is technically an unfinished novel, integrates the life (and death) of the author, the story, and Peruvian history into one creative work. At least, in the eyes of later critics and readers, *The Foxes* has been considered an avant-garde novel that mirrors contemporary Peruvians. Today this novel is internationally appreciated and considered by many intellectuals as, in fact, his best novel. It is difficult to say if Arguedas conceived his suicide as being part of his last novel or if was a natural combination of his creative process and his mental illness. The insertion of his diaries in the novel and the earlier publication of his first diary in a journal give the impression of a preconceived plan.¹⁴⁶ Vargas Llosa has asserted that Arguedas blackmails his readers with his suicide making them to reconsider the text under the light of the suicide.¹⁴⁷ However, Vargas Llosa is not a valid critic for Arguedas; even though both authors are the two major authors of Peruvian literature, they represent two different types of world visions. Vargas Llosa, as many Peruvians with a more

¹⁴⁵ José María Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, 21.

¹⁴⁶ Marcela Croce recreates the polemic between Arguedas and Cortazar in regard to the publication of his first diary in the issue six of *Amaru Journal* in 1968. Marcela Croce (comp.) *Polémicas Intelectuales en América Latina. Del Meridiano Intelectual al Caso Padilla (1927-1971)* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Simurg, 2006), 160.

¹⁴⁷ Mario Vargas Llosa, “Literatura y suicidio: el caso de Arguedas (El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo),” *Revista Iberoamericana* 110-111(1980, enero-junio): 3-28.

occidental education, has not understood fully the anthropological message of Arguedas' literature and pays too much attention to the biographical references, such as Arguedas' suicide. But we may understand Arguedas' suicide as a mythological symbolism for the beginning of a new era in Peruvian history, and that he transformed his biography into a metaphor of Peru. Arguedas forces his readers to go over the circumstantial events of his life to have a futuristic vision and Vargas Llosa in his interpretation did not make this step. The suicide of an author, as Elizabeth Leake asserts, "reinscribes the dyad of writer-reader, instigating a reinterpretation of his or her opus by readers armed with new hermeneutical tools."¹⁴⁸

Besides his vocation for creative writing, social relations also had an influence on Arguedas' authorial self-construction and how he portrayed it in his letters and diaries, especially in the way he shaped his identity. Self-identity is not something fixed; it is shaped by social relations. As Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann highlight in their book *The Social Construction of Reality*, "Identity is formed by social process. Once crystalized, it is maintained, modified, or even reshaped by social relations."¹⁴⁹ An example of how Arguedas reinforced his identity as a Peruvian intellectual through social relations is seen when he traveled to México for the first time to attend an international conference. In a letter written to his friend Moreno Jimeno in June of 1940 he states:

Mexicans are stupid guys and some have a pedantry that is not possible to tell in four lines, when I return we will talk extensively about that, which incidentally, is the most appalling disappointment of the many I have suffered. In Mexico the intellectual and cultural environment is completely pedestrian; Moro¹⁵⁰ told us yesterday, 'Comparing with the

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth Leake, *After Words: Suicide and Authorship in Twentieth-Century Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 13.

¹⁴⁹ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1967), 173.

¹⁵⁰ César Moro (1903-1956) was a Peruvian poet and painter who belonged to the international surrealist movement. During his stay in Paris met André Bretón and Paul Éluard.

Mexicans we are so civilized and cultured that it's irritating,' and that it is. Lima is a city of light compared with this though it seems a fantasy to you.¹⁵¹

This first impression Arguedas had about Mexicans intellectuals changed in other trips he took and after he had the opportunity to meet artists and intellectuals he had more connection with. Indeed, one of the Mexican artists he admired and identified with was the writer Juan Rulfo, who is mentioned in his *First Diary* and described as an artist who writes by vocation and passion:

Yesterday I wrote four pages. I write them as therapy, but not without thinking they may be read. How weak is the word when the spirit goes badly! When feelings are charged with all that we learned through all our senses, the word is also charged with that material. And how it vibrates! I became an ignorant fool [ever] since 1944. I have read very little since then. I remember [Herman] Melville, [Alejo] Carpentier, [Bertolt] Brecht, [Juan Carlos] Onetti, and [Juan] Rulfo. Who else has charged the word as you have Juan, with all the weight of sufferings, of consciousness, of holy lust, of manliness, of all there is in the human creature that is ash, stone, water, and violent putrefaction for giving birth and singing, like you?¹⁵²

Arguedas addresses this to Juan Rulfo, as if he was talking to him directly through his diary. When writing about Rulfo, Arguedas is seeing himself in him and thus also writing about himself. There is a natural identification with Rulfo. It is important to highlight that in his *First Diary*, Arguedas differentiates between professional writers and true creators, those who write for

¹⁵¹ "Los mexicanos son unos tipos estúpidos y de una pedantería que no es para contarla en cuatro líneas, a mi vuelta hablaremos extensamente de eso, que dicho sea de paso, es el desengaño más espantoso de cuantos he sufrido. En México el ambiente intelectual o de cultura es completamente chato; Moro nos decía ayer "Comparando con los mexicanos nosotros estamos podridos de puro civilizados y cultos," y así es. Lima es una ciudad luz comparada con ésta aunque te parezca una fantasía." José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú to John Murra, (no date, probably January/February 1940), in Roland Forgues, ed., *José María Arguedas: La Letra Inmortal: Correspondencia con Manuel Moreno Jimeno* (Lima: Ediciones de los Ríos Profundos, 1993), 70.

¹⁵² "Ayer escribí cuatro páginas. Lo hago por terapéutica, pero sin dejar de pensar en que podrán ser leídas. ¡Qué débil es la palabra cuando el ánimo anda mal! Cuando el ánimo está cargado de todo lo que aprendimos a través de todos nuestros sentidos, la palabra también se carga de esas materias ¡Y cómo vibra! Yo me convertí en ignorante desde 1944. He leído muy poco desde entonces. Me acuerdo de Melville, de Carpentier, de Brecht, de Onetti, de Rulfo. ¿Quién ha cargado a la palabra como tú Juan, de todo el peso de padeceres, de conciencias, de santa lujuria, de hombría, de todo lo que en la criatura humana hay de ceniza, de piedra, de agua, de pudrición violenta por parir y cantar, como tú?" José María Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, trans. Frances Horning Barraclough (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 12.

love. For Arguedas, Rulfo and he were true creators because both learned with all his senses and from the “inside” of things, being able to convey a holistic experience in his writing. Later on, in the *First Diary*, he refers to Rulfo in this way:

You smoked and talked, I listened to you. I felt fulfilled, really happy, that we two would talk with each other as equals. In contrast, I saw Don Alejo Carpentier as very ‘superior’ to me, something like those villagers looked at me, calling me ‘doctor.’ I had only read *El Reino de este Mundo* [The Kingdom of this World] and a short story; since then I’ve read *Los Pasos Perdidos* [Lost Steps]. He’s really different from us! His intelligence penetrates things from the outside in, like a ray; he is a brain that takes in lucidly and gladly the substance of things, and he dominates them. You too Juan, but you from inside, very deep inside, from the germ itself; the intelligence is there; it [that intelligence] worked, before and after.¹⁵³

Explaining these two types of writers and situating himself on Rulfo’s side and opposing Carpentier (“He’s really different from us!”), Arguedas is constructing an image of himself as a writer who has the capacity to understand things profoundly “from inside,” close to the nature of the things themselves, different from a modern western separation of subject from object. Arguedas identifies with the object itself. It is likely due to this approach towards literature that caused a famous and polemical controversy between Arguedas and the Argentine writer Julio Cortázar about the professional role of a writer. In an open letter addressed to Roberto Fernández Retamar, Cortázar states that a Latin American professional writer has a better perspective of his own country once he views it from the outside.¹⁵⁴ This assertion made Arguedas react and write

¹⁵³ “Tu fumabas y hablabas, yo te oía. Y me sentí pleno, contentísimo, de que habláramos los dos como iguales. En cambio a don Alejo Carpentier lo veía como muy “superior,” algo así como estos poblanos a mí, que me doctoreaban. Sólo había leído *El reino de este mundo* y un cuento; después he leído *los pasos perdidos*. ¡Es bien distinto a nosotros! Su inteligencia penetra las cosas de afuera adentro, como un rayo; es un cerebro que recibe lúcido y regocijado, la materia de las cosas, y él las domina. Tú también Juan, pero tú de adentro, muy de adentro, desde el germen mismo; la inteligencia está; trabajó antes y después.” Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and from Down Below*, 14.

¹⁵⁴ Julio Cortázar, Saignon (Vaucluse), to Roberto Fernández Retamar, May 10, 1967 in Marcela Croce, comp., *Polémicas Intelectuales en América Latina Del Meridiano Intelectual al Caso Padilla (1927-1971)* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Simurg, 2006), 167-180.

an article in the journal *Amaru*, expressing ideas that later formed part of his *First Diary* inserted into *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, where he considers himself a provincial writer, who does not need to travel outside his country to understand it better and claiming also that he is not “professional” writer as Cortazar and many others:

I have decided to talk today about Cortázar’s pronouncement on the professional writer. [According to that] I am not a professional writer, Juan [Rulfo] is not a professional writer, and that García Márquez is not a professional writer. Writing novels and poetry is not a profession! As for me, a person whose experience has been on a national level and who, in certain crannies goes on being professional—according to my provincial understanding, the word *oficio* (or trade) means a technique learned and pursued specifically and in a self-satisfied way to earn money. In that sense I am a provincial writer; yes, indeed, my admired Cortázar, and mistakenly or not, according to my understanding that’s what Don Joao [Gimaraes] was and that’s what Don Juan Rulfo is. Because other-wise, Juan—who knows the [writing] trade infinitely well—ought not to be poor. I have had to study ethnology as a profession; the Ambassador was a medical doctor; Juan got stuck being a white-collar worker. We write for the love of it, for enjoyment, and because we need to, not because it is our trade.¹⁵⁵

As we can see Arguedas separates writers into two groups: “the professionals” and the ones who write “for love,” but this classification is not as simple as it seems. The writers “for love” not only have a total commitment to their art but also have a different rationale: their intelligence penetrates things from the inside. Why would these authors (Arguedas, Rulfo, Guimaraes, García Márquez) have this different rationale? Michael Warner may give us an approach to better understand this. In his article, *Franklin and The Letters of the Republic*, Michael Warner, referring to Benjamin Franklin, points out that “the importance of print in Franklin’s career is not simply a matter of his having been involved in the local struggles surrounding the transformation of the political by print. He may be said to have embodied the written subject that is, to have lived within

¹⁵⁵ Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, 20-21.

the structures of career and personality in a way that was profoundly shaped by written and printed discourse, and that articulated a career for the subject of that discourse.”¹⁵⁶ According to Warner, a new rationale was created in Franklin’s mind, one produced by print and writing, the “literal intellection.” As in Benjamin Franklin’s case, we could say that Arguedas also learned a certain rationale, not only because of the handling of print but because of his management of all senses, especially the sense of hearing, which allows closer integration with the outside world. Carolyn Marvin in her article “Communication as Embodiment” states that “Textualization therefore creates the modern dilemma in which the textual class risks losing touch, and everything that term implies, not only with the real conditions that sustain their society but also with their own moral commitments as willing bodies, for which there is no substitute, to the survival of the group.”¹⁵⁷ In contrast, through his early belonging to an oral tradition, Arguedas was embedded in a more contextualized and integrated sensorial form of learning and also had a sense of belonging to a community. Juan Rulfo was a similar case in Mexico, and this is probably why Arguedas found in him a kind of soulmate in creative writing style. To explore more deeply the new rationale Arguedas developed in his letters, belonging to two discursive traditions (oral and written), could be a challenge. We can only intuit his way of thinking through these written texts. What we can mainly reveal through his letters is his emotional state of mind, the intensity of his language, the affective tone that permeates his writing, the man behind the text.

In several letters Arguedas mentions aspects of his literary creation process, what kind of things inspired him to write, or created the momentum for his writing. Being an anthropologist he was always attentive to oral narrations while traveling in the Andean regions. He was prepared

¹⁵⁶ Michael Warner, “Franklin and the Letters of the Republic,” *Representations*, 16 (autumn, 1986), 113.

¹⁵⁷ Carolyn Marvin, “Communication as Embodiment,” in *Communication as: Perspective of Theory*, ed. Gregory J. Shepherd, Jeffrey St. John, and Ted Striphas (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006), 73.

for this practice from childhood upbringing but implemented it when a teacher in Sicuani, motivating his students to collect oral stories in their own towns. In a letter written to John Murra, describes how an oral story captured his attention, even though he could not record it. Later on, he transcribed it from memory and published it. Today this story is one of the most famous of Arguedas' stories. Here the excerpt of the letter to Murra: ¹⁵⁸

... I could finish writing in Quechua and translate the story *El Sueño del Pongo*, which is one of the most beautiful and interesting I knew. I heard it from an Indian from Qaqa but I could not record it. I've now reconstructed it as a form of exercise in writing a narrative in Quechua. I think the experience has ended up being a good one. ¹⁵⁹

According to his letters, it seems that Arguedas usually trusted his intuition during his anthropological research and as a starting point in his writing process. In a letter he talks about one of his trips on which he shared the company of John Murra and reinforces this idea that what moved his creative writing was intuition:

I write you because I understand that you accompanied me to Chimbote more than anything to keep me company. All that we talked about on the road and in the hotel bar while drinking tea and coffee helped me a great deal. I don't take notes. I keep it all in the

¹⁵⁸ "El sueño del pongo" [Dream of the Servant] tells the story of a humble indigenous laborer who was mistreated by his master, but had a dream and told it to his master: the two, the laborer and the master died at the same time and came before God. Then God asks the most beautiful angel to cover the body of the master with honey and the oldest angel to cover the body of the laborer with muck, and finally ordered the laborer and the master to lick each other for eternity. Arguedas liked this oral Andean story because it implied the awareness indigenous people had of the unfair treatment they received and although they did not rebel, retribution arrived in their dreams of Divine Justice. See "Pongoq mosqoynin (Qatqa runapa willakusqan). El sueño del pongo (cuento quechua)" in José María Arguedas, *Obras Completas I* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1983), 249-258. See translation of this story in Appendix B.

¹⁵⁹ "...pude concluir de escribir en quechua y traducir el cuento El sueño del pongo, que es uno de los más bellos e interesantes que conocía. Se lo oí a un indio de Qaqa pero no pude grabarlo. Lo he reconstruido ahora a manera de un ejercicio de escribir una narración en quechua. Creo que la experiencia ha resultado buena." José María Arguedas, Lima, Peru, to John Murra, March 7, 1965, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 114.

intuitive. Either I write a good novel or I won't be of any use for anything else. If I write the novel I can continue doing other things.¹⁶⁰

In this excerpt we see that Arguedas again considers literary writing as the activity that defines him. His research as an anthropologist gave him his source of information about Peruvian life, which he uses to nourish the stories of his novels. Not having a strict methodology, Arguedas moved easily between literature and ethnography.¹⁶¹ According to the anthropologist and Arguedas' disciple, Alejandro Ortiz, he had "una mirada vagabunda" [a wandering look] towards reality, which allowed him to follow his intuition and not be constrained by any theory. During his speech as a keynote speaker at the International Conference "Arguedas: The Dynamic of Cultural Encounters," celebrating Arguedas' Centennial in 2011, Ortiz said:

Arguedas knew the prisms of that time. Theory and prestigious explanation, [and] consecrated literary tastes provided support for him, for his intellectual curiosity; including being a channel for his intuition and expression. (...). Of course the opposite, the wandering look, without aim or procedure, is also risky in our science. But it is not the case of Arguedas the anthropologist. He collected stories and songs, described the fair of Huancayo, the changes that were brewing in Puquio. His wandering eyes did not betray him. Today, after so many years, his rebellious voice is an example.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ "Te escribo porque comprendo que me acompañaste a Chimbote más que todo por acompañarme. Todo cuanto hablamos en el camino y en el bar del hotel mientras tomábamos té y café me sirvió mucho. Yo no tomo apuntes. Todo lo guardo en lo intuitivo. O escribiré una buena novela o no serviré para nada más. Si escribo la novela podré seguir haciendo otras cosas." José María Arguedas, Lima, Peru, to John Murra, August 4, 1968, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 174.

¹⁶¹ US cultural anthropology, until the rise of cultural materialism, was not strictly scientific from Franz Boas (1858-1942) through Clifford Geertz (1926-2006), who stressed interpretation of culture as the key. In Latin America, the Cubans anthropologists Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969) and his disciple Miguel Barnet (1940-) also preferred a non-strictly scientific methodology. Miguel Barnet is, as same as Arguedas, an ethnographer and writer.

¹⁶² "Arguedas conocía los prismas de entonces. La teoría y la explicación prestigiosa, los gustos literarios consagrados, le servían de apoyo, para su curiosidad intelectual, inclusive fueron un cauce para su intuición y su expresión. (...). Claro que lo opuesto, la mirada vagabunda, sin norte ni procedimiento, también es riesgosa en nuestra ciencia. Pero, no es el caso del antropólogo Arguedas. Él recogió cuentos y canciones, describió la feria de Huancayo, los cambios que se gestaban en Puquio. Su mirada vagabunda no lo traicionó. Hoy, después de tantos años, su voz insumisa es un ejemplo." Alejandro Ortiz, "Vigencia de la Obra de José María Arguedas," in Cecilia Esparza, et. al., ed., *Arguedas: La Dinámica de los Encuentros Culturales* (Lima: Fondo Editorial Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2013), 18-19.

Arguedas was always trying to find a new literary style to portray what was happening in Peruvian everyday life. In a letter to John Murra, he expresses his anxiety about finding a new literary style in which to write *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, in the same way that it was difficult for him to find a style for writing *Agua*, the book of his first stories:

Today was a great day. With great fear I read Chapter II of the new novel with Sybila. I wrote that chapter three times almost entirely and I was afraid that it had not come out well. I found it tremendous, as 34 years ago, when I read the second version of *Agua*; as in this case, I kept it for six months because of the identical fear and hope! The first version of *Agua* I tore up even though it seemed very good to my friends. It was not good. It needed a new style and with a lot of work I found it. Also now, for Chimbote and for who I am now, a kind of other man, I needed another style...¹⁶³

Arguedas portrays his authorial self as a writer who is looking for a new writing style to describe better different realities. *Agua*, his first stories talk about the reality of indigenous people in small Andean towns in Peru and it was his first linguistic challenge because Spanish did not allow him, in first place, to convey the “soul” of this people; he discarded the first version of *Agua* and wrote a new one that satisfied better his ambition of a better portray of Andean people. William Rowe says that the most important technical achievement of Arguedas is in the sphere of language, where he transforms the Spanish into a media that that can represent the Indian.¹⁶⁴

Similarly, in his last novel the challenge was to find a style to portray the process of cultural encounters produced by migration.

¹⁶³ “Hoy ha sido un gran día. Con gran temor leímos con Sybila el capítulo II de la nueva novela. Escribí ese capítulo tres veces casi en su integridad y tenía miedo de que no hubiera quedado bien. ¡Lo encontré formidable, como hace 34 años, cuando leí la segunda versión de *Agua* que, como en este caso, guardé durante seis meses por idéntico temor y esperanza! La primera versión de *Agua* la rompí a pesar de que a los amigos les pareció muy buena. No era buena. Requeriría de un estilo nuevo y con gran trabajo lo encontré. También ahora, para Chimbote y para lo que soy ahora, una especie de otro hombre, necesitaba de otro estilo...” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to John Murra, December 22, 1968, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 187-88.

¹⁶⁴ Juan Larco (comp.), *Recopilación de textos sobre José María Arguedas* (La Habana: Centro de Investigaciones Literarias de las Américas, 1976), 258.

Arguedas also needed reassurance for his literary work. It is not unusual to see long sections in his letters to his friends talking about the progress of his novels. In a 1961 letter to Emilio Westphalen, he writes:

Yesterday at noon I was able to complete the correction of the novel I've written about "El Sexto." It has 163 legal size pages. During the afternoon I felt greatly relieved, but today I once again have a headache. I did not want to write you in such low spirits. I have edited this last story four times. I think the third time I did it in an overly anguished way, shortly before leaving for Guatemala. The first time I read the now finished story I was very excited. After a few months, I reread it and it caused me [to feel] great disappointment; many sections, too many pages. Without you and André, I gave the originals to a young man whose good judgment and honesty had impressed me: Alberto Oquendo. His observations confirmed that the story was not good.¹⁶⁵

Editing the story four times contradicts his portrayal of a more spontaneous writer given in other letters. As same as his portrayal of "not being an intellectual," it seems that he is reluctant to reinforce an image of a "professional writer", even though he was.

In the same letter to Westphalen, Arguedas continues sharing how he felt in regard to the creative literary process, once he began to write:

You know better than anyone that I am a storyteller without illustration. Life and the indestructible love I feel for the human being and for all living beings defend me. Even in moments of greater personal despondency I have not stopped believing in this dazzling evidence that is life and nature. Also a kind of inexhaustible purity has allowed me to venture to describe terrible facets of perversion, without this ugly stuff spattering the reader. I had a boundless mercy for the victims and actors of perversion. For over twenty

¹⁶⁵ "Ayer al medio día pude concluir la corrección de la novela que he escrito sobre "El Sexto". Tiene 163 páginas de tamaño oficio. Durante la tarde me sentí sumamente aliviado, aunque hoy vuelvo a tener dolor de cabeza. No deseaba escribirte en tan mal estado de ánimo. He corregido cuatro veces este último relato. Creo que la tercera vez lo hice en forma excesivamente angustiosa, poco antes de partir a Guatemala. La primera vez que leí el relato ya concluido me entusiasmó muchísimo. Luego de unos meses lo volví a leer y me causó una gran desilusión, muchos pasajes, muchísimas páginas. Faltándome tú y André, le entregué los originales a un joven cuyo buen criterio y honestidad me habían impresionado: Alberto Oquendo. Las observaciones de él confirmaron que el relato no era bueno." José María Arguedas, Lima, Peru, to Emilio Westphalen, July 12, 1961, in Westphalen, *El Río y el Mar*, 227.

years the memory of these events was building up and demanding of me that I should denounce them.¹⁶⁶

Besides portraying himself as a writer with “no illustration,” which reinforces the idea of “non-intellectual,” in this letter to Emilio Westphalen, we see again that what was most important for Arguedas is to portray reality, but also to give testimony of the injustice he witnessed against disadvantaged people, since he was a child. He expressed here a kind of transcendent love, one that can have compassion even for the “actors of perversion”. He also felt a mission to denounce unfair events without looking for revenge. Reading passages like this, it is difficult to understand how come some members of the terrorist movement “shining path” (including his second wife) used Arguedas message to support this violent movement. On the contrary, Arguedas would be closer to the non-violence movement, which “seeks to liquidate antagonisms but not antagonists themselves.”¹⁶⁷ Something else that is highlighted in this excerpt is that he is proud of keeping himself “pure” even in the middle of a hostile atmosphere, as the prison *El Sexto* was. In 1937 Perú had a military government leaded by Oscar Benavides. Arguedas and his friends Moreno Jimeno, and José Ortiz Reyes were students at San Marcos University in Lima; the fascist Italian general Camarotta came to visit the University. Several students protested and tried to avoid the entrance of general Camarotta to the Department of Humanities. All students who participated in the protest were imprisoned including Arguedas and his friends. He was in prison for eight months between November of 1937 and October of 1938 until he was transferred to the Obrero Hospital, where he

¹⁶⁶ “Tú sabes mejor que nadie que soy un narrador sin ilustración. Me defienden la vida y el indestructible amor que siento por el ser humano y por todos los seres vivos. Aún en los momentos de mayor abatimiento personal no he cesado de creer en esta evidencia deslumbrante que es la vida y la naturaleza. Además una especie de inextinguible pureza me ha permitido aventurarme a describir aspectos terribles de la perversión, sin que esta fea materia salpique al lector. Una piedad sin límites tuve por las víctimas y los actores de la perversión. Durante más de veinte años la memoria de esos acontecimientos fue acrecentándose y exigiéndome que los denunciara.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Peru, to Emilio Westphalen, July 12, 1961, in Westphalen, *El Rio y el Mar*, 228.

¹⁶⁷ Ramin Jahanbegloo, *The Gandhian Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 84.

had a surgery and later was released. Later on, he narrated his experience in prison in the novel *El Sexto*, which has the same name of the prison he stayed; the novel was published in 1961. In *El Sexto* Arguedas describes a variety of characters who reflect the antagonisms he found in prison at the cultural, social, and political levels. The writer noticed that these antagonisms were the same that Peruvian society experienced as a whole. Only the main character in *El Sexto*, Gabriel (Arguedas in real life), was the one who straddled the middle of urban and Andean culture and made an effort to connect both worlds. *El Sexto* portrays the Andean prisoners as more innocent and less corrupt than the urban prisoners. The atmosphere at the prison is represented as an amoral place where there is not any principle of solidarity. Only Gabriel, the main character, is capable of raising himself over misery and exemplifies purity, solidarity, and sensitivity towards any human being.¹⁶⁸

In other letter to Pierre Duvious, Arguedas shows how proud he was to describe the characters of the prison keeping a moderate style that did not offend the reader:

A month ago I sent you a copy of *El Sexto*. (...). The book has had a disconcerting reception. I was very much in fear, despite my previous absolute security. I have dealt with one of the most difficult and challenging aspects of life in Peru, shall we say much of Latin America. A prison where together we were the purest of human specimens, and the most punished by the depravation of those countries, in which mankind is often delivered to the beasts. I touched perhaps what Dostoevsky – you have to understand the irreverence of the quote and the reason for it! – did not want to touch and what some other Hispanic fiction writers did in an almost disgusting way! I have an innate purity to reach certain depths without sully myself and without converting mud into something that spatters offensively over the reader but that enlightens him. I think I have achieved it.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ José María Arguedas, *El Sexto* (Barcelona: Editorial Laia, 1974).

¹⁶⁹ “Hace ya como un mes que le envié un ejemplar de *El Sexto*. (...). El libro ha tenido una acogida desconcertante. Yo temía mucho, a pesar de mi absoluta seguridad anterior. He tratado uno de los aspectos más difíciles y complicados de la vida en el Perú, digamos de gran parte de Latinoamérica. Una cárcel donde estuvimos juntos los ejemplares más humanos, puros y los más castigados por la depravación en estos países, en que el hombre está frecuentemente entregado a las fieras. Toqué lo que quizá Dostoevski--¡ha de comprender la irreverencia de la cita y su razón de ser!—no quiso tocar y lo que algunos otros narradores hispanoamericanos lo hicieron en forma casi repugnante. Yo tengo una pureza innata para llegar a ciertos abismos sin mancillarme y sin convertir el lodo en algo que salpique feo sobre el lector sino que lo ilumine. Creo que lo he conseguido.” José María Arguedas, Lima Peru, to Pierre Duviols, January 8, 1962, Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Itinerarios Epistolares: La Amistad de José María*

The novel *El Sexto* situates Arguedas in the tradition prison inmate literature. Among the most important are representatives of this literature are: Miguel de Cervantes, Oscar Wilde, and Fedor Dostoevsky, mentioned in this excerpt. It is interesting to note that while in the letter to Emilio Westphalen, Arguedas said he was “a storyteller without illustration,” in the letter to Pierre Duvios; he compares himself with Dostoevsky, feeling proud to reach what Dostoevsky did not: to keep the “purity.” It is not the first time that Arguedas insists in false modesty on presenting himself as ill prepared in the intellectual sphere, but once he has a need to mention a theory or writer, he states his credentials. Arguedas suggests in this letter that he has an uncommon capacity of being in the middle of the “depths” of human soul and write about them without contaminating himself and the reading. His “child soul” claimed in other letters (see Chapter One), kept inside him certain innocence to look the world that he is proud off.

Arguedas had a telling epistolary discussion with the writer Enrique Congrains, which sheds light on the conception the author had about the design of a novel, the use of language, and the mission a writer should have. This is one of the exceptional examples on which we can read Arguedas’ addressee’s response, because most of the letters written by his addressees were lost.¹⁷⁰

In the first letter Arguedas writes to Enrique Congrains, he expresses his concern for the style the younger writer used in his novel, but seemed to be satisfied with the content of the work, which is based on Congrains’ experiences in Lima:

Yesterday I finished reading your novel [*Not one, but many deaths*](...). I have to admit that I read it with growing desperation. What have you done with your style, Enrique? I don’t understand how your desire to modernize or refine your style has been able to bring you to the extreme of twisting it until you so seriously compromise such a wonderful work.

Arguedas y Pierre Duviols en Dieciseis Cartas (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2011), 66.

¹⁷⁰ Conversation with Carmen María Pinilla, the main editor of Arguedas’ letters.

Because the work is wonderful, in spite of this terrible wrapping in which you've offered it to us. (...) There is in you, my dearest Enrique, the author that I thought I'd found from the first lines I read of yours: the guy that has lived and felt in his flesh the worst of our drama from Lima, of the metropolis that grows by piling up human waste from the provinces and marinating them, in a product under whose horrifying appearance something great is being formed.¹⁷¹

The response Congrains gives to Arguedas generates a discussion about what should be more important, the style or content of a novel. Congrains disagrees with Arguedas, who sees to give more importance to the content:

Thanks for your letter, especially a thousand thanks for the sincerity with which you confront my novel, and the concern you show for my work. (...) For now I'm not in agreement in assigning absolute values to the elements of the novel. I think your letter tends to affirm that the absolute value is the theme, the subject, and the other elements, the style for example, should be subordinate to, before anything else, the theme. But you go beyond this. Actually you put forward a style based on the understanding of the theme. The task of the writer does not consist in a transparent explanation, but simply in the creation-exposition of a theme, which may be more or less transparent.¹⁷²

In a second letter, Arguedas claims that it was not his intention to impose any doctrine about what should be more important in a work, however, he reinforces his idea that what is more

¹⁷¹ "Ayer terminé de leer tu novela [*No una sino muchas muertes*]. (...). Debo confesarte que la leí con desesperación creciente. ¿Qué has hecho con tu estilo, Enrique? No comprendo cómo tu deseo de modernizar o de refinar tu estilo ha podido llevarte al extremo de retorcerlo hasta comprometer tan gravemente una obra maravillosa. Porque la obra es maravillosa, a pesar de esta terrible envoltura en que nos las has ofrecido. (...). Hay en ti, queridísimo Enrique, el autor que me pareció encontrar desde las primeras líneas que leí de ti: el muchacho que ha vivido y sentido en su carne lo más terrible de nuestro drama limeño, de la urbe que crece amontonando los desechos humanos de las provincias y macerándolas, en un producto bajo cuya apariencia horripilante algo grande se forma. José María Arguedas, Lima, Peru, to Enrique Congrains, Caracas, Venezuela, February 2, 1959, in Pinilla, ed., *Apuntes Inéditos*, 241-242.

¹⁷² "Gracias por tu carta, sobre todo mil gracias por la sinceridad con que te enfrentas a mi novela, y por la preocupación que demuestras por mis trabajos. (...) Por lo pronto no estoy de acuerdo en asignar valores absolutos a los elementos de la novela. Creo que tu carta tiende a afirmar que el valor absoluto es el tema, el asunto, y que los demás elementos, el estilo por ejemplo, deben supeditarse, antes que nada al tema. Pero tú vas más allá de esto. En realidad planteas un estilo en función de la comprensión del tema. La tarea del escritor no radica en la exposición transparente, sino sencillamente en la creación-exposición de un tema, que puede ser más o menos transparente." Enrique Congrains, Caracas, Venezuela, to José María Arguedas, February 11, 1959, in Pinilla, ed., *Apuntes Inéditos*, 244.

important for him is to give testimony through literature of the unjust conditions under which suffering people live:

In truth I had no intention of specifically proposing any kind of doctrine on the novel in the letter I wrote to you; nonetheless, I see by your answer that's what I did; and I prompted you to expose your convictions on the matter. (...) I realize that a precise approach on the novel has never guided me. There has only been a very clear purpose that has guided me: to give testimony. I was a very sensitive child and teenager, to the point that I haven't stopped being either one or the other. I wrote because I wanted to give testimony of the world I knew so intensely: an unjust world of unspeakable cruelty.¹⁷³

Even though Arguedas wanted to justify himself by saying that it was not his intention to formulate any doctrine about how to write a novel, the fact that he prefers to subjugate style to content is significant. As we have seen from other excerpts above, once Arguedas found new cultural or social phenomena in reality that he wanted to portray, he first took the necessary time to find the appropriate style to write that story. Every new story was a challenge and a breaking point in his literary style: *Agua*, *Deep Rivers*, *El Sexto*, *Todas las Sangres*, *The Fox from up Above and the Fox from Down Below* – each one of these literary works was a literary experiment, a new way of using the language but with the singular purpose of portraying a particular reality more accurately. For Arguedas the formality of language or the style which does not take into account the content of the story is artificial. It was not possible for him to separate content from style and it seems that in the case of Congrains' novel, the impression of Arguedas was that both, content and style were disconnected from one another. Arguedas' claim against Congrains was that the

¹⁷³ “De veras no tuve intención de plantear concretamente ninguna especie de doctrina sobre la novela en la carta que te escribí; sin embargo, veo por tu respuesta que así lo hice; y te induje a que tú expusieras tus convicciones sobre el asunto. (...). Me doy cuenta que no me ha guiado nunca un planteamiento preciso sobre la novela. Ha habido solamente un fin muy claro que me ha guiado: dar testimonio. Fui un niño y adolescente muy sensible, a tal punto que no he dejado de ser ni uno ni el otro. Escribí porque deseaba dar testimonio del mundo que tan intensamente conocía: un mundo injusto de atroz crueldad.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Peru, to Enrique Congrains, Caracas, Venezuela, February 21, 1959, in Pinilla, ed., *Apuntes Inéditos*, 248-249.

reader can be distracted by the artificiality of his language, losing the main message of the novel: the social reality portrayed. Again, contradicting himself, he is showing that his creative writing implies a very careful process of experimentation with language and multiple editing, not flowing naturally through him mediumistically.

Another aspect to highlight in regard to his authorial self is how excited and proud Arguedas felt when he saw that what he foretold in his novels later happened in reality. Thus, in a letter sent to Murra in November 12, 1961, he writes about one of his novels, *Deep Rivers*:

Deep Rivers concludes with the faith of the ‘farmhands’ ‘lice eaters’ of the haciendas. They go to the town, to the capital in spite of the grapeshot. They go for a mass. But sometime they will go in this way for something that will be bigger; they are doing it now.¹⁷⁴

In this excerpt, Arguedas means that the idea he foretold in *Deep Rivers*, a future popular rebellion, becomes real. In the novel all Andean peasants of the village—described here as “farmhands” and “lice eaters” to point the pejorative way they were considered by the landlords—organize themselves as never did before to attend to a mass and pray for the health of the village. In his letter he is employing a circumlocution to produce a crescendo ending: “...But sometime they will go in this way for something that will be bigger; they are doing it now.” He refers to the fact that in Peru Andean peasant uprisings against the unfair hacienda system started around the end of 1950s, having its more successful event in 1962, in Cuzco, when it is created a peasant union, which later would rebel against the unfair system in the hacienda *La Convención*, becoming the most important antecedent for the future Agrarian Reform. César Lévano, a Peruvian journalist and Arguedas’ friend, states that there is an anti-feudal message in Arguedas’ novel *Deep Rivers*.

¹⁷⁴“*Los Ríos Profundos* concluye con la fe del “colono” “come piojos” de las haciendas. Estos marchan al pueblo, a la ciudad capital, a pesar de la metralla. Van por una misa. Pero alguna vez avanzarán de ese modo por algo que sea más grande; lo están haciendo ya.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to John Murra, November 12, 1961, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 65.

Lévano emphasizes the fact that in this novel indigenous people gather around a Catholic myth; but this also reflects a power that would later gather around political and social interests. According to Lévano, Arguedas' extreme sensitivity caused him to be depressed because no one understood the socio-political message hidden in *Deep Rivers*. However, Arguedas was pleased that at least one person, his friend Lévano, understood the message. Lévano considers that the problem with this novel is that the socio-political message is implicit and not explicit.¹⁷⁵ I did not find in Arguedas' letters an explanation of why he prefers the implicit over the explicit, but a probable reason would be that his choice to describe Peruvian reality and foretell his future was literature and not a direct political message. Even though he shared socialist ideals, he did not belong to any political party.

In the same way of relating his fiction with real events, years later, in 1968, in a letter to Murra, he refers to his last novel, *The Fox*, which was an attempt to portray the process of cultural encounter as a result of internal migration; but this was a challenging task for Arguedas. Being knowledgeable about Andean reality, a city and port like Chimbote, where several cultures, races, and classes were mixed, was a new phenomenon for him:

I am writing my novel about Chimbote in a state full of agony. (...) I believed that the second chapter of the book would now be saved, but Chimbote, what the fox from down below knows, I do not know very well. This is an agonizing work, John. Soon I will write you at more length.¹⁷⁶

When Arguedas traveled for the first time to Chimbote, his intention was simply to collect some oral traditions as part of a bigger project. However, once he was in the port and realized the

¹⁷⁵ César Lévano, oral interview by author, digital recording, Lima, Perú. 22 of August of 2009.

¹⁷⁶ "Estoy escribiendo en estado de plena agonía mi novela sobre Chimbote. (...). Creí que al segundo capítulo del libro, estaría ya salvado, pero Chimbote, lo que sabe el zorro de abajo no lo sé bien. Y eso es trabajo agónico, John. Ya te escribiré más largo." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra, USA, June 12, 1968 in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 172-173.

“boiling” social process that was being gestated, he changed his mind and decided to observe, to study and to describe the new phenomena. This was an ambitious goal, even more when he wanted to write a novel, as a result of his anthropological research. Arguedas was not sure about the final result of these social and cultural changes. In *The Fox from Up Above and The Fox from Down Below*, he does not have all the answers for understanding the complex process of intercultural interaction, leaving the questions open for future generations. He consulted with some friends and colleagues about his opinion of the novel. The sociologist Anibal Quijano was one of them. On December 17, 1968, he writes to Murra about Quijano’s opinion of the novel:

Quijano thought that, strictly speaking, the two chapters (I and III) were bad for the same reasons that caused me to doubt their quality – they didn’t reflect Chimbote’s reality accurately. Fortunately, the novel, to be one, has to be the reflection of who I am and through me, if it’s possible, the reflection of Chimbote [itself]; from that incomprehensible seething mass of humanity and through that teeming mass, [and] my own emotional upheaval which is incredible, from present day Peru and from the hugely I wouldn’t say tormented but hounded man of today.¹⁷⁷

This excerpt demonstrates that even though Arguedas’ intention was to describe social reality through literature, he acknowledges – to some extent – that in the creative process it is impossible to portray an exact reflection of reality because the subjectivity of the writer filters that reality through his literary voice. Maybe he was also at a loss because he had formed his identity based on the longstanding indigene-European dichotomy as fixed compass points but contemporary Chimbote did not reduce to such a dichotomy, and it was in flux without the weight of tradition that made the indigene-European dichotomy resonate for much for Arguedas. It is

¹⁷⁷ “A Quijano le parecían malos los dos capítulos propiamente dichos (I y III) por las mismas razones que me hacían a mí dudar de su calidad: no reflejaban fielmente la realidad de Chimbote. ¡Felizmente! La novela, para ser tal, tiene que ser el reflejo de lo que soy yo y a través mío, si es posible, el reflejo de Chimbote: de ese inaprensible hervidero humano y a través de ese hervidero, mi propio hervidero que es fenomenal, del Perú actual y del descomunadamente no diría que martirizado sino acicateado hombre actual.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra, USA, Dic., 17, 1968 in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 181-182.

important to mention that Quijano is a sociologist who was one of the intellectuals criticizing Arguedas' novel *Todas las Sangres* [All the Bloods] in a debate that occurred in 1965. On that occasion Arguedas felt overwhelmed and misunderstood by all his critics, unable to defend his position: that, indeed, in *Todas las Sangres*, he had portrayed Peruvian society of that moment.¹⁷⁸ In this letter, however, he shows himself to be more confident and capable of defending his beliefs about the relationship between fiction and reality. Even though he accepts the fact that representation of reality is filtered by the subjectivity of the author (himself), still he realizes that both are interconnected and impossible to separate. Thus, he says that Chimbote is the reflection of his own upheaval. We should note this clear identification between Chimbote's turmoil and his own personal turmoil. Once again, Arguedas does not separate subject from object.

2.3.2 Relation with writers and editors

An important element that these letters show about Arguedas' authorial self-portrayal is that even though he used to say he considered himself as not well prepared in comparison with other academic scholars, in his letters he displays his considerable knowledge about different authors and topics. Arguedas' false modesty and high academic standards caused him to continually repeat that he was not a good scholar in front of other people. In any case, this fame of not being a great academic became common knowledge at this time and Arguedas was more appreciated for his contribution to literature than to other fields. Nevertheless, in the letters Arguedas wrote to his friend Moreno Jimeno, it is possible to see his effort to keep abreast of the

¹⁷⁸ Arguedas: *Poética de la Verdad: Segunda Mesa Redonda sobre Todas las Sangres* (Lima: Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, 2011).

new intellectual movements around the world and to convey this knowledge to his students. This apparent false modesty was one of several of Arguedas' paradoxical attitudes. Pedro Lastra, his editor and friend, was initially reluctant to publish the letters Arguedas wrote to him, but after the publication of the letters to Moreno Jimeno, Lastra changed his mind because through these letters Lastra noticed that Arguedas' true literary knowledge was exposed and this revealed how much Arguedas was determined to make little of himself saying constantly that he was ignorant or not well prepared, even when he was an avant-garde intellectual of the time. But in a way, this is logical: Arguedas' rhetorical self-construction portrayed him as a natural mediumistic creator who wrote as he felt not so much as he thought—if he also claimed intellectualism and academic achievement it would undermine his dominant authorial persona in his letters and elsewhere. Then, Lastra considered that Arguedas' letters could show a more genuine Arguedas than the one he had himself constructed.¹⁷⁹ For example, in some of the letters Arguedas wrote to Moreno Jimeno we can see how knowledgeable he actually was about several authors and also that he was well informed about new literary tendencies, as we can read in several excerpts. In one of the letters he engages and praises the formally experimental yet bitterly socially critical poetry that Federico Garcia Lorca wrote of his 1920-1930 sojourn in the United States:

Yesterday and the day before yesterday I have been embedded with the reading of "Poeta en Nueva York." Many poems I've read more than five times: the three of "Los Negros", almost all of "Calles y Sueños," "Cielo Vivo," "El Nocturno del Hueco," "Paisaje con Dos Tumbas y un Perro Asirio," "De Vuelta a la Ciudad," and that wonderful ode to Whitman. The whole book is of infinite beauty. It is a García Lorca completely new to me, and perhaps deeper and more a poet; these should be "his verses," they appear more legitimate to me; the others from "Romancero," "Cante Jondo," his dramas, are the expression of when his life merges with that of the people; but these from "Poeta en Nueva York" in a certain sense have the universality of poetry, the root of the world, of infinite beauty and the human infinite.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Edgar O'Hara, *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 110.

¹⁸⁰ "Ayer y antier he estado embebido con la lectura de "Poeta en New York". Muchos poemas los he leído más de cinco veces: los tres de "Los Negros", casi todos los de "Calles y Sueños", "Cielo Vivo", "El Nocturno del Hueco",

Arguedas shows not only his knowledge about Lorca, but his identification with the poet. The connection is established through the poetic language of Lorca, which shows Arguedas its humanity and beauty. He mentions several of Lorca's poems and mentions that he has read them "more than five times;" this gives us the impression that he behaves as a meticulous intellectual that takes its time to analyze the poems and compare them.

In other letter to his friend Moreno Jimeno, he shows his interest to learn more about "American literature":

Every time I went into your room I was frightened of my ignorance, especially in the current American literature. You'll have to help me a bit, together with this I [am] certifying a package, sending you "Momento Español" [1937, Spanish Moment, on the Civil War, by Juan Marinello and Manuel Altolaguirre], "Los Salvajes" [The Savages], that great [Mikhail Petrovich] Artsbachev novel, and a copy of the Venezuelan "Revista de Cultura" where there is that beautiful study on the work of [Mexican muralist José Clemente] Orozco. ["José Clemente Orozco. Pintor Mexicano" in *Revista Nacional de Cultura*, 22 (September, 1940), 133.] I beg you to send me "Palmeras Salvajes" [1939, Wild Palms by William Faulkner] and some other book that you think I should read, well packed and certified so that it isn't ruined. I left with Ali all the books you lent me, "Residencia en la Tierra," [1933, 1935, by Chilean poet Pablo Neruda] [Nikolai Vasilievich] Gogol and one volume of your "Russian Classics." I am thinking about reading with my students this year García Lorca, part of "Los Malditos," [1937, by Manuel Moreno Jimeno] part of [Emilio Adolfo] Westphalen, continue with "Serpiente de Oro" [1936, Ciro Alegría's novel] and "Dona Bárbara" [1929, Rómulo Gallegos' novel], [which] I've lost. Can you get me a copy?¹⁸¹

"Paisaje con dos tumbas y un Perro Asirio", "Vuelta a la Ciudad", y esa oda maravillosa a Whitman. Todo el libro es de una infinita hermosura. Es un García Lorca completamente nuevo para mí, y acaso más profundo y más poeta; estos deben ser "sus versos", me parecen más legítimos; los otros del "Romancero", de "Cante Jondo", de sus dramas, son la expresión de cuando su vida se funde con la del pueblo; pero estos de "Poeta en New York", en cierto sentido tienen la universalidad de la poesía, la raíz del mundo, de lo bello infinito y de lo infinito humano." José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú, to Moreno Jimeno, November 22, 1940, in Forgues, *La Letra Inmortal*, 98.

¹⁸¹ "Cada vez que entraba a tu cuarto me asustaba de mi ignorancia, especialmente de la literatura americana actual. Tendrás pues que ayudarme un poco, junto con ésta certifico un paquete enviándote "Momento Español", "Los Salvajes", esa gran novela de Artsbachev, y un ejemplar de la "Revista de Cultura" de Venezuela donde está ese hermoso estudio sobre la obra de Orozco. Te ruego que me mandes "Palmeras Salvajes" y algún otro libro que tú creas que debo leer, por certificado y bien empaquetadito como para que no se malogre. Te dejé donde Ali todos los libros que me prestaste, "Residencia en la Tierra", Gogol y un tomo de tus "Rusos Clásicos". Pienso leer con mis alumnos este año, García Lorca, parte de "Los Malditos", parte de Westphalen, continuar "Serpiente de Oro" y "Doña Bárbara", se me ha perdido ¿puedes conseguirme un ejemplar?" José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú, to Moreno Jimeno, April 4, 1941 in Forgues, *La Letra Inmortal*, 104.

Moreno Jimeno, Arguedas' best friend at that time, had an important intellectual influence over the author. In this excerpt Arguedas portrays himself as "ignorant" when felt overwhelmed by the good personal library Moreno Jimeno had. He seems to be more updated than Arguedas in regard to literary tendencies. However, this portrayal as "ignorant" contrasts with the quantity of books that Arguedas mentions with confidence and emphasizing that he is planning to use some of them in his classes with his students.

Continuing the exchange of letters with his friend, Arguedas shows himself as voracious reader and making comments about the books:

At this time I finished reading "Las Palmeras" [William Faulkner's *Wild Palms*], I read "La Desconocida del Sena" [1941, by Uruguayan-French writer Jules Supervielle] and I am finishing "Los hombres y las montañas." ["Men and Mountains" 1935 by Russian writer Ilia Lakovlevich Marshak] How beautiful "Palmeras" is! I touched me in such a way that many nights I could not sleep with the image of the characters and because it was dominated by the wonderful atmosphere and style of the work. Don't you think that it's a revolutionary novel, essentially revolutionary? Very few times have I read a more heartbreaking description, more terrible than the misery in which people live who can't find work in a vast country like U.S. Do you remember those scenes in the mines of Utah? Of the Poles? How beautiful, how horribly sad it is!¹⁸²

As we see in these excerpts of letters to Moreno Jimeno, Arguedas was knowledgeable about international literature and he was also kept up-to-date with new literary production in Peru.

¹⁸² "En este tiempo acabé de leer "Palmeras", leí "La Desconocida del Sena" y estoy concluyendo "Los hombres y las montañas". ¡Qué hermoso es "Palmeras"! Me conmovió de tal manera que muchas noches no pude dormir con la imagen de los personajes y porque estaba dominado por el ambiente y el estilo maravilloso de la obra. ¿No te parece que es una novela revolucionaria, esencialmente revolucionaria? Muy pocas veces he leído una descripción más desgarradora, más terrible de la miseria en que vive la gente que no puede encontrar trabajo en un país inmenso como E.U. ¿Te acuerdas de aquellas escenas en las minas de Utah ¿De los polacos? ¡Qué hermoso, qué espantosamente triste es!" José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú to Moreno Jimeno, (no date, probably September, 1941), in Forgues, *La Letra Inmortal*, 121.

In his letters he quickly pivots from one nation to another, one genre to another, and speaks of the authors in a familiar way—obviously he identified with transnational literary culture, but if he revealed this, it would undermine his claims to speak purely of Peru from the heart. Such an awareness of what other contemporary writers were doing suggests their influence upon him in a way that was more eclectic than purely expressive of the Peruvian Nation. Why did he then portray himself as a non-intellectual? This is, of course, part of Arguedas' ambiguous authorial self. He sometimes displayed insecurity, but even being conscious of and affected by his mental illness he was still able to overcome this emotional pain for many years and ultimately fulfill many of his professional goals. His authorial self is described by himself in his letters as one of the most important aspects in his life. Beyond that, we can feel his emotional intensity when describing his readings. He was totally involved with the characters and the circumstances on which they were based. He is moved by the reality portrayed in the novels, probably because, as said before, for him the frontier between fiction and reality is necessarily blurred in literature, at least in the type of literature he was interested in. Thus, he imposed on himself a sense of responsibility to accomplish a description of Peruvian reality through literature without forgetting that the actual social reality is a dynamic force. For example, in a letter to his brother he is concerned with the aesthetic evolution of Peru compared with México:

I have a mass of complaints, a great loneliness; and I can tell this to no one when this atrocious pain comes to the base of my head, it seems that I have lost everything. And how much I still have to do and write! Today, brother, I see the world and our country with an extraordinary clarity. I just finished an essay about the inverse social and esthetic evolution followed by México and Peru. Because the fire that a man has when called by art is never put out even in agony.¹⁸³

¹⁸³“Tengo un tumulto de quejas, una gran soledad; y a nadie puedo decirle cuando me viene el atroz dolor a la base de la cabeza, parece que todo lo tengo perdido. ¡Y cuanto me falta hacer y escribir! Hoy, hermano, miro el mundo y a nuestro país con una claridad extraordinaria. Acabo de escribir un ensayo sobre la inversa evolución social y estética seguida por México y Perú. Porque el fuego que tiene el hombre llamado por el arte no se apaga ni en la

Here his dramatic style and his commitment with literary creation are clear again, yet he also portrays himself as an artist who has a mission to fulfill – to write even in agony. He mentions the pain in his head and still he could finish an essay about the different social and esthetic paths followed by Mexico and Peru. He probably refers to his belief that in México there were fewer prejudices in regard to race and culture than in Peru. Arguedas considered that Mexican artists, in contrast to Peruvian artists, had more mental freedom to listen and represent the multiplicity of voices of their country.¹⁸⁴

Arguedas thought that it was going to be mainly through his literary work that Peruvians and non-Peruvians would have the opportunity to gain a closer understanding of their society. Now we can say that he was right. He used literature as a tool to express the complexity of Peruvian social conditions. Fiction and reality go hand by hand in his literary work, which could be considered testimonial. Following George Yudice, who asserts that “testimonial writing may be defined as an authentic narrative, told by a witness who is moved to narrate by the urgency of a situation (e.g., war, oppression, revolution, etc.). Emphasizing popular, oral discourse, the witness portrays his or her own experience as an agent (rather than a representative) of a collective memory and identity,”¹⁸⁵ we could say that Arguedas found in testimonial writing the possibility to portray the evolution of Peruvian society in such a complete manner as no other Peruvian writer did before.

agonía.” José María Arguedas, Lima, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, Jan. 31, 1944, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 173.

¹⁸⁴ See José María Arguedas, “El complejo cultural en el Perú y el Primer Congreso de Peruanistas,” *América Indígena*, 2 (México, 1952). In José María Arguedas. *Formación de una Cultura Nacional Indoamericana* (México: Siglo XXI editores, 1977), 6.

¹⁸⁵ George Yudice, “Testimonio and Postmodernism,” *Latin American Perspectives*, 18, no. 3, Voices of the Voiceless in Testimonial Literature, Part I (Summer 1991): 15-31.

Throughout the years his confident increased and he felt proud about the positive reception of his work. His success made him write about himself a little differently in his letters, with not so much doubt as before. Thus, in his last year of life, even in moments of deepest anguish, Arguedas wrote proudly of his international recognition. In a letter written to his brother in May 1969, he explains:

My case is so incredible. The novels that I've written are beginning to be taken seriously everywhere. A translation's being done in Italian of "Los Ríos [profundos]" and "Todas las Sangres;" I've received a wonderful letter from a Russian writer who is translating them into Russian.¹⁸⁶

Ten years earlier, in 1959, what was most important for him was to let Peruvians know each other through his novels. In a letter to his friend Emilio Westphalen, he writes:

And now something else: what can you tell me about Deep Rivers? I had about a month ago a memorable visit. Alejandro Quijano came to my office. He has understood the scope that I tried to give to the book and he has found even more [implications]. He is a young man, about 30 years old who replaced me at the Normal [Public Education Institute] while I was in Europe. He told me, among other things, that he belonged to a bitter and pessimistic generation; [bitter] at the bankruptcy of APRA [Peruvian political Party] and the Communist Party. But after reading the novel, he was convinced that all of them were bitter and pessimistic because of their ignorance of Peru. That was what he was grateful about. That the novel had restored his faith in the country.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ "Mi caso es tan increíble. Las novelas que he escrito están empezando a ser tomadas en cuenta seriamente en todas partes. Se está haciendo una traducción al italiano de "Los Ríos" y de "Todas las Sangres"; he recibido una hermosísima carta de una escritora rusa que está traduciéndolas al ruso." José María Arguedas, Santiago, Chile, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, May 12, 1969, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 280.

¹⁸⁷ "Y ahora a otra cosa: ¿qué me dirás de Los Ríos Profundos? Yo tuve ya hace como un mes una visita inolvidable. Vino Alejandro Quijano a mi oficina. Ha comprendido los alcances que intenté dar al libro y le ha encontrado otros más. Es un hombre joven, como de 30 años que me reemplazó en la Normal mientras fui a Europa. Me dijo, entre otras cosas, que él pertenecía a una generación amarga y pesimista; a la de la quiebra del APRA y del partido comunista; pero, que después de la lectura de la novela, se había convencido que eran todos ellos amargos y pesimistas por desconocimiento del Perú. Que eso era lo que agradecía. Que la novela le había devuelto su fe en el país." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Emilio Westphalen, June 11, 1959, in Inés Westphalen, *El Río y el Mar*, 210.

The words of Quijano encouraged Arguedas, who could feel that the mission he imposed over him: allow Peruvians, especially those who lived in Lima, a better understanding of the social, political and cultural realities of the Peru of his time. Each of his novels was a project intending to describe a certain part of that reality. For example, when he refers to his semiautobiographical novel about his 1937-1938 incarceration, *El Sexto* in a 1962 letter to the French historian Pierre Duviols, he conveys:

The book has had a disconcerting welcome. I was quite afraid, despite the previous absolute security. I have tried one of the most difficult and challenging aspects of life in Peru, let's say of a large part of Latin America. A prison where were together the most human of specimens, pure and the more punished by the depravity in these countries, in which man is often delivered to the beasts.¹⁸⁸

Even though he shows his satisfaction of being able to portray in his novel the difficult situation prisoners lived; he is also concerned about the effect *El Sexto* might have in the United States, due to the fact that in the past the US Embassy refused him a visa, likely because of his proximity to the Socialist Party, which had splintered off from the nation's Communist party in 1930:

The government of the United States will sink me even more into the blacklist after the publication of *El Sexto*, because one of the main characters [in it] is a miner from Morococha who speaks about the horrors committed by the 'gringos' in those years that on the door of their club there appeared a sign saying: 'No entry to Peruvians and dogs.' There isn't any hatred against the United States as a country in the book. It would be absurd, but against the Cerro de Pasco [mining company] that has symbolized almost exclusively the United States in Peru, unfortunately, until the rise of International Petroleum [a Canadian subsidiary of Standard Oil of New Jersey] that has now come to the fore.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ "El libro ha tenido una acogida desconcertante. Yo temía mucho, a pesar de la absoluta seguridad anterior. He tratado uno de los aspectos más difíciles y complicados de la vida en el Perú, digamos de gran parte de Latinoamérica. Una cárcel donde estuvimos juntos los ejemplares más humanos, puros y los más castigados por la depravación en estos países, en que el hombre está frecuentemente entregado a las fieras." José María Arguedas, Lima Perú, to Pierre Duviols, January, 8, 1962, in Pinilla, ed., *Itinerarios Epistolares*, 66.

¹⁸⁹ "El gobierno de los Estados Unidos me hundirá aún más en la lista negra después de la publicación de *El Sexto*, porque uno de los personajes principales es un minero de Morococha que habla de los horrores cometidos por los 'gringos' en aquellos años en que figuraba a la puerta de su club un letrero que decía: 'Prohibida la entrada a los peruanos y los perros'. No hay odio contra los Estados Unidos como país en el libro. Sería absurdo, sino contra la

The fact that one of the characters of the *El Sexto* complains against the abusive treatment American mining companies in Peru gave to Peruvian workers worries him. He clarifies, though, that there is not any repulse against the United States in his novel, neither against its people, but against the capitalists American companies that invest in Peru taking advantage of local workers.

In another letter to Murra he continues expressing his concern about the effect that *El Sexto* may have for his relations with the United States Embassy:

I finished correcting my story *El Sexto* on my return from Guatemala. And that work left me almost breathless. It is as I said, an appalling but true document. I fear they'll corner me after the book is published. Now I'm on the blacklist of the US Embassy and that of the Communists; after *El Sexto* that situation will probably intensify. I feel that there are people like us who are a bit on the margin. It is possible that within a few years efforts will be done to change the very nature of societies around the world, as they have done in many places. In this intransigent and exclusionary world there are many other things and people that are superfluous. Perhaps we only count on a few days to give a testimony that is illuminated by tenderness and not by hatred.¹⁹⁰

We can see that Arguedas considered his novel as a testimony to the extent that he was afraid of being castigated by the United States Embassy due to one character in the novel complains about the American companies that invested in Peruvian mining. He may found paradoxical that the US Embassy rejects him for being a “communist” while he did not consider himself a

Cerro de Pasco que ha simbolizado casi de manera exclusiva en el Perú a los Estados Unidos, desgraciadamente, hasta el auge de la Internacional Petroleum que ha pasado ahora a primer plano.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra, November 21, 1960, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 51.

¹⁹⁰ “Yo concluí de corregir mi relato sobre El Sexto a mi regreso de Guatemala. Y ese trabajo me dejó casi sin aliento. Es, como le dije, un documento atroz pero verídico. Temo que me acorralen después de que el libro se publique. Ahora estoy en la lista negra de la Embajada de los Estados Unidos y en la de los comunistas; después de El Sexto probablemente se remachará esa situación. Siento que hay gentes que quedamos un poco al margen. Es posible que dentro de pocos años se trate de cambiar la naturaleza misma de las sociedades en todo el mundo, como ya lo han hecho en tantos sitios. En este mundo intransigente y excluyente están demás muchas cosas y hombres. Acaso sólo contemos con pocos días para dar un testimonio que esté iluminado por la ternura y no por el odio.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra, July 23, 1961, in Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 61.

communist; on the contrary, he is saying here that he is already in the “blacklist” of the communists, probably because he showed reluctance to belonging to the communist party. He preferred to be in the “margins” and not to be framed by any ideology. Arguedas uses the word “tenderness” as an added value for describing the purpose of his message. He wanted that testimonies of Peruvian reality would be illuminated by and “tenderness and not by hatred.” As we have seen in other excerpts, he was proud of his capacity of narrating a violent reality (in this case the reality of a prison) but with compassion for all the characters involved, not allowing the hate to distort the reader’s understanding of human essence.

His relation with editors is also an important side of Arguedas’ authorial self-portrayal to highlight in his letters. It appears to have always been cordial. One of his editors was Juan Mejía Baca, who published Arguedas’ books between 1950 and 1960. Mejía Baca had a press that had his name, “Juan Mejía Baca” and was one of the most important Peruvian editors and director of the Peruvian National Library. According to Sinesio López, the correspondence between Arguedas and him, not only reveals the way in which Arguedas perceived cultural institutions in Peru, especially the university, but also expresses freely his opinions about different intellectuals.¹⁹¹ For example, López highlights Arguedas’ opinion about how Creole intellectuals in Lima in the 1950s blocked the emergence of writers from other cities, especially in rural areas.¹⁹² The writer was always interested in promoting intellectual life outside of the capital and making it accessible for many people. It is for this reason that he congratulated the work Mejía Baca was doing in his publishing house and bookstore in Huancayo, a central Peruvian city. Besides, Arguedas felt free to give advice to his editor, as in a letter of On November 29, 1954:

¹⁹¹ Carmen Maria Pinilla, ed., *Correspondencia entre José María Arguedas y Juan Mejía Baca en la Biblioteca Nacional* (Lima: Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, 2005), 5.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 6.

Some friends from Jauja who have visited me have told me that your bookstore satisfies a basic need in the valley. And because these people are very intelligent and I trust them a great deal, I told them my impressions about it possibly being worth considering eliminating from the place this academic feeling that it has. (...). I think that teachers and people from the middle class who read should also meet there.¹⁹³

Thus, Arguedas believed that having a warmer and kinder environment would motivate more people in Huancayo to read and buy books. The experience of reading a book must be, for him, a grateful experience and a bookstore could motivate his clients to stay there, offering a cultural environment for sharing opinions.

He also complained to Mejía Baca about the economic situation many writers suffer.

On March 11, 1955, he writes:

It is a real misfortune that some of us authors suffer from a lot of poverty because that shadow also sometimes reaches the tranquility of others [around us]. In a country with literature so original as ours, authors should be rich or find generous people to protect them.¹⁹⁴

Arguedas knew that Mejía Baca, as an editor, had the capacity to protect writers' work, therefore, here he is giving a subtle message to Mejía Baca on whom he deposited his confidence. Thus, he was very happy when he knew about a fair competition that Mejía Baca organized. Carmen María Pinilla points out that Arguedas had a bad experience with such contests at the beginning of his professional career as a writer. In 1940 his novel *Yawar Fiesta* was not pre-

¹⁹³ "Unos amigos de Jauja que me han visitado me han dicho que tu librería cumple una necesidad de primer orden en el valle. Y como son gente muy inteligente y de muchísima confianza, les comuniqué mis impresiones acerca de que quizá convendría quitarle al establecimiento ese aspecto un poco académico que tiene. (...). Yo pienso que deberían reunirse también los maestros y la gente de la clase media que lee." José María Arguedas, Huancayo, Peru, to Juan Mejía, Lima, Peru, Nov. 29, 1954 in Pinilla, ed., *Correspondencia entre José María Arguedas y Juan Mejía Baca en la Biblioteca Nacional*, 20.

¹⁹⁴ "Es una verdadera desgracia que algunos autores suframos de mucha pobreza, porque esa sombra alcanza también, a veces, la tranquilidad de otros. En un país de literatura tan inicial como el nuestro, los autores debieran ser ricos o encontrar personas generosas que los protejan." José María Arguedas, Huancayo, Peru, to Juan Mejía, Lima, Peru, March 11, 1955 in Pinilla, ed., *Correspondencia entre José María Arguedas y Juan Mejía Baca en la Biblioteca Nacional*, 28.

selected for an international contest because it was considered too ethnographic. Also his novel *Diamantes y Pedernales* was submitted to the national contest “Ricardo Palma”; however, the jury awarded no prize.¹⁹⁵ Some years later in 1958, Arguedas won the prize “Fomento a la Cultura Javier Prado” with his anthropology thesis: “The evolution of indigenous communities.” In 1959, his novel *Deep Rivers* won the same prize. In 1963 he received the “certificate of excellence,” the Ibero-American Award, from the William Faulkner Foundation. These achievements gave more confidence to Arguedas, who always felt undervalued in his own country. But at the time Mejía Baca organized a literary contest in 1956, he nstill was suspicious about the impartiality of these events; therefore he congratulates his editor for making a difference. On April of 1956 writes:

Days have passed for me so fast. My intention was to write you the day after the handing out the prize to Vegas Seminario. I wanted to congratulate you for the almost unimaginably honest way in which the competition was brought about that you and Villanueva sponsored.¹⁹⁶

These excerpts demonstrate Arguedas’ solidarity with his colleagues and also his concern about Peru’s cultural environment.

Another of Arguedas’ editors and a friend was Pedro Lastra, a Chilean poet, with whom the author exchanged letters from 1962 to 1969. In an interview by Edgar O’Hara, Lastra states that initially he was not interested in publishing Arguedas’ letters because he considered them to be private material of interest only to the author and recipients of the letters. However, after the publication of the first two books of his letters, Lastra changed his mind because in those letters

¹⁹⁵ José María Arguedas, Huancayo, Peru, to Juan Mejía, Lima, Peru, March 11, 1955 in Pinilla, ed., *Correspondencia entre José María Arguedas y Juan Mejía Baca en la Biblioteca Nacional*, 13.

¹⁹⁶ “Se me han pasado los días increíblemente. Fue mi propósito escribirte al día siguiente de la entrega del premio a Vegas Seminario. Deseaba felicitarte por la forma casi inverosímilmente honesta en que se ha llevado el concurso de novela que tú y Villanueva patrocinan.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Peru, to Juan Mejía, Lima, Peru, April 24, 1956 in Pinilla, ed., *Correspondencia entre José María Arguedas y Juan Mejía Baca en la Biblioteca Nacional*, 47.

the author wrote to his friend Moreno Jimeno, Lastra noticed that a new Arguedas was revealed. Indeed, in the letters to Moreno Jimeno, as we have seen before, the writer discusses his literary preferences and erudition, which openly contrasts with the image Arguedas projected about him. Lastra also considered that the author's letters to the anthropologist John Murra reveal Arguedas as a researcher, ethnologist, and folklorist, aspects of the man that were not properly known. Therefore, Lastra thought that the letters Arguedas addressed to him might also contain something interesting that had not been exposed before.¹⁹⁷ Besides, Lastra believed that he was an exceptional case, one in which there was no difference between the man and the author. In an interview I conducted with Lastra, he told me that he met Arguedas at a literary conference in Concepción, Chile, in 1962, and waited with expectation for a moment to see him because, before that conference, he already had a sense of Arguedas through his literature. Lastra asserts: "Este autor tendría que parecerse mucho a los personajes de sus novelas y cuando lo vi lo confirmé...en este autor no hay separación entre el que el habla, el que escribe y el que existe" [This author would have to look a lot like the characters in his novels and when I saw him I confirmed it.... In this author there is no separation between he who speaks, he who writes and he who exists].¹⁹⁸ This impression of Lastra is similar to my own impression about Arguedas' letters. To me he seems to be the same, independently on the addressees to whom he is writing. I can feel his personality through the letters and I can imagine that if I had known him in person, he would be very similar to the persona he constructs in his letters.

¹⁹⁷ Edgar O'Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 1997), 109-112.

¹⁹⁸ Pedro Lastra, oral interview by author, Lima, April 25, 2014.

In that interview, Lastra also told me that it was very easy for him to connect with Arguedas and the relationship was very affectionate almost from the beginning.¹⁹⁹ It is probably that, for this reason, in the letters Arguedas wrote to his friend and editor, he shares thoughts not only on the professional level but also about his inner feelings, even those referring to his mental health. Thus, on September 28, 1968, while Arguedas was writing *The Fox from Up Above and The Fox from Down Below*, he writes to Lastra: “This novel will be possible thanks to the many deaths that I have suffered since I finished writing ‘T. las S.’ [Todas las Sangres] and its resulting revivals.”²⁰⁰

Arguedas also wrote to Lastra not only as a friend but also in his position as an editor. On September 19, 1966 Arguedas explains:

I found in Lima a letter from [Spanish poet and publisher] Carlos Barral in which he asks me [about] publishing ‘Deep Rivers’ and ‘Yawar Fiesta;’ he offers me an advance. I answered him declaring that I signed a contract with you.²⁰¹

The contract Arguedas signed would have legally bound him to Lastra, so it seems to be Arguedas subtly asking Lastra to release him from the exclusivity of his contract so that he can publish with the much more renowned and wealthier house and make some immediate money from it. However, as we are going to see in Chapter Four, Arguedas had an affective relation with Lastra and it is possible also that this excerpt shows transparency and loyalty to his friend.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ “Esta novela será posible gracias a las muchas muertes que he sufrido desde que terminé de escribir ‘T. las S.’ y las consiguientes resucitadas.” Here ‘T. las S’ refers to *Todas las Sangres* (All Blood), a novel published in 1958, which was misunderstood by Peruvian intellectuals at that time. José María Arguedas, Chimbote, Peru, to Pedro Lastra, Chile, Sept. 9, 1968 in Edgar O’Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 57.

²⁰¹ “me encontré en Lima con una carta de Carlos Barral en que me pide la edición de ‘Los ríos profundos’ y de ‘Yawar Fiesta;’ me ofrece un anticipo. Le he contestado manifestándole que firmé contrato con Uds”. José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pedro Lastra, Chile, Sept. 19, 1966 in Edgar O’Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 50.

Even right before his death, he carefully prepared a letter to another editor, Gonzalo Lozada, giving first his excuses to him for not being able to submit the final version of *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* and second, detailed instructions of what to do with the manuscript:

One of these days I am going to make my final departure for [from] Lima. This letter will be delivered to you along with the 'Last Diary' of the *Foxes*, a document that may be able to accomplish what it seeks to do – mitigate the real (albeit partial) truncation of the novel. (...) For that reason, Don Gonzalo, if in your judgment and in that of your advisers the narrative is found lacking, let my widow offer it to any publisher, of [in] Peru or any other country²⁰²

This letter was included in the publication of his last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, along with the final letters he wrote to the authorities and students of the Universidad Agraria [Agrarian University] where he committed suicide. We can see that even in the last moments of his life, Arguedas took time to take care of his professional responsibilities and did not want to leave his editors not knowing how to proceed after his suicide.

2.3.3 Political Commitments

In his portrayal of authorial self, Arguedas mentions the influence of his political views in his writing. As said before, even though he shared the political views of socialism, he did not have an explicit political project; neither was he an active militant of any political party. Edmundo Murrugarra, a former student of Arguedas' who considers that the author was more a cultural militant than a political militant. According to Murrugarra, Arguedas foresaw that the social

²⁰² José María Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, translated by Frances Barraclough (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2000), 261-62.

transformation in Peru was going to come through Andean cultural resistance more than a political revolution.²⁰³ However, the letters he wrote to the Trotskyite and peasant leader, Hugo Blanco, show Arguedas' social commitment to Peruvian political change. There is, though, a valid question: to what extent did he write these letters influenced by the political arena of that moment? This was the time of the success of the Cuban Revolution. When Arguedas visited Cuba because he was invited to be on a jury for the "Casa de las Americas" literary award in 1968, he was impressed by what he saw there and wrote a poem in Quechua called "Cubapaq" (To Cuba).²⁰⁴ The 1960s was a polarizing time in which many writers in Peru felt they had to espouse a political party, and Arguedas, being engaged with suffering people naturally empathized with the communist project in Cuba and socialist movements around the world. Nevertheless, he did not want to be under the direction of any political party in his country. Arguedas is more attuned with cultural politics but not with partisanship. He demonstrated his concern about all political parties in Peru through the characters in his novel *El Sexto*, because in this novel he portrays badly political characters he met in prison. In a letter written to Murra in 1960, he says:

I'm almost certain that the publication of that novel would raise against me all the powerful forces of the current politics of Peru: the right, the APRA Party, the Communist Party. I would remain with the support of the not so fanatical of the three parties and the opinion perhaps of those called free men. *El Sexto* was a dreadful political prison.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Edmundo Murrugarra, "Arguedas militante político por una nueva civilización," *Perspectiva Internacional*, 27 (January, 2010), <http://perspectivainternacional.wordpress.com/2010/01/27/arguedas-militante-politico-por-una-nueva-civilizacion/>.

²⁰⁴ The book *José María Arguedas: Cubapaq- A Cuba* (La Habana: Fondo Editorial Casa de las Américas, 2012), contains letters, articles, pictures, etc., that show the relation Arguedas had with Cuba; in this book the poem *Cubapaq* has been published in both Spanish and Quechua.

²⁰⁵ "Estoy casi seguro que la publicación de esa novela levantaría contra mí todas las fuerzas poderosas de la política actual del Perú: la derecha, el partido aprista, el partido comunista. Me quedaría con el apoyo de los no muy fanáticos de los tres partidos y con la opinión quizá de los llamados hombres libres. *El Sexto* fue una prisión política espantosa." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra, November 21, 1960, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 50.

In this letter he is mentioning the three more important political tendencies of Peru at the time: the “right” that was represented by the peruvian aristocracy; the APRA Party (Partido Aprista Peruano), founded by Victor Raul Haya de la Torre in 1930 that followed the Latin-American anti-imperialists ideals of that time; and the Peruvian Communist Party, founded by Jose Carlos Mariátegui in 1928. Even though Arguedas agrees with the advocating of social justice from the communist party and admired the ideals of Mariátegui, he rejects the methods and self-righteousness of any party. His option was to be in the margins of the partisan arena.

In other letter to his friend Murra in 1961, expresses some doubts about his portrayal of the parties in the novel:

I'm afraid of being unfair or exaggerated. Both parties – Apra and Communism – were then and now, one of them is even more, were rigid, exclusionary and as ruthless as their persecutors; but they fought for social justice; were intoxicated by exclusionary messianism. I loved and feared them both. That is clearly exposed in the story [*El Sexto*]. I am worried, however, about what I do make the characters say, because it is not the case now of characters, let's say "freely" created but of individuals that symbolize or represent ideologies and party methods that exist and that have to feel portrayed and whom readers have to hold them as examples.²⁰⁶

There are no novels by Arguedas that he considers just fiction. Literature was simply a tool for the expression of a testimony based on his experiences. Probably the only letters where Arguedas expressed political ideas with passion are the ones written to the Communist (Trotskyite) activist Hugo Blanco, who led the 1962 a Quechua uprising in the hacienda La Convencion, Cuzco that redistributed land to peasants and set up its own local government that served as a model for

²⁰⁶ “Tengo miedo de ser injusto o exagerado. Ambos partidos—Apra y comunismo—eran entonces y ahora, uno de ellos lo es más aún, eran rígidos, excluyentes y tan implacables como sus persecutores; pero luchaban por la justicia social; estaban embriagados de mesianismo excluyente. Los amaba y les temía a ambos. Eso está claramente expuesto en el relato. Me preocupa sin embargo lo que hago decir a los personajes, porque no se trata ya en este caso de personajes, digamos “libremente” creados sino de individuos que simbolizan o representan ideologías y métodos de partidos que existen y que han de sentirse retratados y que los lectores han de tomarlos como ejemplos.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to John Murra, February 21, 1961, in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 53.

the future Agrarian Reform in 1969. Hugo Blanco, was jailed from 1963 until his 1971 deportation to Chile and he exchanged two letters with Arguedas only at the end of 1969. Blanco was a political activist, a man of action, while Arguedas was a man of ideas. Indeed, it was only through his literature that Arguedas promoted a political change.

In a letter wrote to Blanco in 1969 Arguedas says:

Perhaps you've read my novel *Deep Rivers*, remember brother, the strongest, remember. In this book I don't only speak about how I cried ardent tears; with more tears and more rage I speak about pongos²⁰⁷ and farmhands of the hacienda, of their hidden and immense strength, of the fury that burns in the seed of their heart, fire that is not quenched. Those lice-ridden, flogged daily, forced to lick the land with their tongues, men despised by their own communities, those, in the novel, invade the city of Abancay without fear of grapeshot and bullets, defeating them²⁰⁸

There are few letters in which Arguedas takes a direct political stance. In most of them he writes about daily concerns with a high emotional and affective tone, or about his literary work. However, in one of his last letters to Hugo Blanco, he tells about a possible political scenario for Peru:

I'm not well, my strength is turning dark. But if I die now, I will die more peaceful. That beautiful day will come and that one that you speak about, one in which our people will be born again, come, I feel it, I feel the dawn in the apple of my eye, in that light, drop by drop, your burning pain is falling, drop by drop without ever ending. I fear that daybreak will cost blood, so much blood.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Pejorative name given to indigenous servants by the land owners.

²⁰⁸ "Quizás habrás leído mi novela *Los Ríos Profundos*, recuerda, hermano, el más fuerte, recuerda. En este libro no hablo únicamente de cómo lloré lágrimas ardientes; con más lágrimas y con más arrebato hablo de los pongos, de los colonos de hacienda, de su escondida e inmensa fuerza, de la rabia que en la semilla de su corazón arde, fuego que no se apaga. Esos piojosos, diariamente flagelados, obligados a lamer tierra con sus lenguas, hombres despreciados por las mismas comunidades, esos, en la novela, invaden la ciudad de Abancay sin temer a la metralla y a las balas, vencéndolas." José María Arguedas, Lima Peru to Hugo Blanco, Lima, Peru, November 1969, in *Cuadernos Arguedianos* 3 (2000): 83

²⁰⁹ "Yo no estoy bien; mis fuerzas anohecen. Pero si ahora muero, moriré más tranquilo. Ese hermoso día que vendrá y del que hablas, aquél en que nuestros pueblos volverán a nacer, viene, lo siento, siento en la niña de mis ojos su aurora; en esa luz está cayendo gota por gota tu dolor ardiente, gota a gota, sin acabarse jamás. Temo que ese amanecer cueste sangre, tanta sangre." Ibid. p.84

Arguedas, writing in light of the international uprisings of 1968, appears to express a possible revolution in Peru, and the description of future times is composed of hope and pain. Even though Arguedas wrote just two letters to Hugo Blanco and he could not read the last letter Blanco sent him because his death occurred before it arrived; some people, including his second wife, Sybila Arredondo, consider that Arguedas displays his political inclinations in these letters. Sybila Arredondo believes that Arguedas was a political man, who revealed his political views in his literature and that the letters he wrote to Hugo Blanco are the evidence of his political position.²¹⁰ It could also be argued that he practiced an appropriately different kind of politics, cultural politics, in an age of state surveillance. We should note that the tone in which Arguedas wrote to Hugo Blanco is different from the tone of the rest of his letters. It is only in the letters that he wrote to Blanco that he emphasizes a revolutionary attitude in an explicit way in a time of international political turbulence and upheaval. Besides the political environment of that time, Sybila Arredondo herself was a leftist activist who later on belonged to the terrorist movement, Shining Path. Arguedas, being an extremely sensitive person, it is likely that Sybila Arredondo exerted a political influence over him, prompting him to write Hugo Blanco, who Sybila (and not Arguedas) met in person. In any case, Arguedas was very clear in rejecting violence and resentment throughout his work. Arguedas denounced injustice and despair but he did not call for violent action. He limits his literary work to being a testimony and an exhortation to be more compassionate about social injustice in Peru. He was not a political leader, but a witness who presented his testimony and used literature to portray Peruvian reality. For example, in his novel *Deep Rivers*, the protagonist, the adolescent Ernesto felt empathy for the suffering peasants who were mistreated by the landlords and describes this injustice in the novel. In the last chapter of *Deep Rivers* there is an uprising of

²¹⁰ Interview to Sybila Arredondo in *Runa* 6 (1977): 15

the peasants forcing to the priest of the town to make a mass for the people who died because of the plague that stroke the village. When describing the uprising of the peasants asking for the mass, Arguedas highlights the capacity of organization of the Andean peasants and subtly warns Peruvians about the power indigenous people have to rebel when they decide to do it.

During the conversation I had with Hildebrando Pérez, Peruvian poet of the 1960s and former student of Arguedas, he said that his generation has not had the courage to produce a deep analysis of Arguedas' work and the man himself from an ideological perspective, likely because of the fear of uncovering the myth and finding the man.²¹¹ Arguedas was committed to social change but not to any political party or ideology. Besides, given the arrests around him and his own desire to get off the blacklist, maybe there is some degree of self-protection in his stance—after all it is not an unreasonable to prefer working subtly to undermine the system, a strategy that in the long term could be more effective.

After reading his letters, I can affirm that what it is out of discussion is that he was mainly an intellectual with an artistic and sensitive soul. To understand Arguedas and his work we would have to embrace his sensitivity, versatility, and contradictions. We must read Arguedas without any preconceived notion or label. To reveal the man behind his texts, we will need to allow Arguedas to speak of himself through his letters.

²¹¹ Hildebrando Pérez, oral interview by author, Lima, Peru, June 3, 2008.

3.0 PART II: ARGUEDAS IN HIS WORLD

Until now we have analyzed how Arguedas fashioned himself through his letters. In this section we will see how he portrayed his world: the people nearest him, the impressions he had of the countries he visited, and how he approached nature and music. I have chosen these three areas because after reading his letters, I realized they describe Arguedas' world. As we will see, besides literature and anthropology, these other three aspects of his life were of great importance for him and were interwoven by a key element – *affection*.

The approach by Fernando Rivera in his book *Dar la Palabra* [Giving the Word] enlightens our analysis of Arguedas' use of affection in his texts. Rivera asserts that there is a flow of affection and “sense” in Arguedas' writing, mainly in his fictional writing, but this can be generalized to all of his writing.¹ This flow of affection is shown through its excessive use that ultimately generates a form of demand for affection.² Rivera is taking into account that in Andean culture, the practice of reciprocity is very important. This practice implies that any service or favor rendered among the members of a community produces another service in return and this is not an obligation but a natural practice inherent to the Andean Cosmovision. Reciprocity is a mechanism that allows the strengthening of social networks and, therefore, the reproduction and continuity of Quechua

¹ Fernando Rivera, *Dar la Palabra: Ética, Política y Poética de la Escritura en Arguedas* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2011), 22.

² Ibid., 25.

society.³ According to Rivera, the excess of affection in Arguedas' writing is regulated by the logic of reciprocity and, therefore, this excess of affection is indeed a demand for love from the other. The more affection he gives, the more love he demands. Under this logic, it is easier to understand all the tenderness Arguedas tried to give to all living beings. In his condition of being an orphan child and a misunderstood adult, Arguedas gave all the love that, in turn, he needed to receive.

There are other approaches to *affect* that we should take into account. For example, Eric Shouse compares the notions of *feeling*, *emotion*, and *affect* considering that “feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*” and that “an affect is a non-conscious experience of intensity.” According to Shouse, *affect* is the most abstract concept of the three because it is more related to the corporeal and the body has its own grammar; therefore, *affect* cannot totally be expressed or realized through language. Being more connected to the body, *affect* can be considered a force of encounter.⁴ However, the corporeal approach to the concept of *affect* has been put into debate. Thus, Melissa Gregg in her book *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices*, points out that even though this term has emerged in cultural studies as a “key term in the wake of expressed feminist desires to think through the body,”⁵ this meaning can be variable. Gregg focuses more on how *affect* can be contagious through the text; therefore, “affect can exist within the text itself, and arise from the page as it is read”⁶ because “affective writing speaks directly, from the head and the heart, in response to something felt to be fundamentally important. It refuses a detached analysis.”⁷ This concept of affective writing, focused in the text, can be applied to

³ Edith Pérez Orozco, *Racionalidades en Conflicto. Cosmovisión Andina (y Violencia Política) en Rosa Cuchillo de Oscar Colchado* (Lima: Pakarina Ediciones SAC, 2011), 23.

⁴ Eric Shouse, “Feeling, Emotion, Affect,” *Journal of Media and Culture*, 8, no 6 (2005), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>.

⁵ Melissa Gregg, *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 8.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, 18.

Arguedas' letters, where the reader experiences a more direct connection with the author when reading his letters. His affective writing is inherent to the essence of his letters.

In the following chapters, through some excerpts from Arguedas' letters, we are going to unveil the way affection in these texts is related to people (Chapter four) and to his environment (countries he traveled around, music, and nature) producing a form of synesthetic communication (Chapter five).

3.1 CHAPTER 4: RELATION WITH PEOPLE

Not only the concept of *affect*, but also the *mundane* can shed light on the analysis of Arguedas' letter writing when referring to his relations with people. This concept, expressed by Melissa Gregg, "is a grounding mechanism, a gesture of honest and humble beginnings, from which our speech might depart, and necessarily, land."⁸ She asserts that the mundane "has mechanisms to recognize the subtle and determined ways people forge responses to social change."⁹ We could say that through his "mundane" interactions, the writer shaped his social persona and reinforced his social values. Besides, in his condition of *wakcha* Arguedas' relations with people were characterized by overflowing affection. In this chapter we are going to analyze Arguedas' mundane interactions with family, women, and friends as well as his affective relations with them.

He enjoyed direct connection with people and valued simplicity and authenticity probably because of his early experience of living in Andean towns, where people are usually less

⁸ Melissa Gregg, "A Mundane Voice," *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 2/3 March/May (2004) 363–83. Quote on 375.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 380.

sophisticated and more transparent than people from the capital, Lima. He believed that people from small towns are kinder and more honest than people from the city. This type of mundane interactions is showed in his letters. Thus, in January 19, 1944, he wrote to his brother:

I really liked Mr. Alva. He's one of those gentlemen from the provinces who've been able to conserve the purity of their spirit, and that have that eternal youth which I've only seen in gentlemen from our lands. Do you remember Ramón Escajadillo from San Juan? How good it feels [being] with them! Because in their consciousness everything is transparent and full of kindness and joy.¹⁰

In this letter he is giving a brief description of a man, a friend of his brother Aristides, who visited him from Caraz, a small town in the province of Ancash, Peru. Even though Arguedas could form good friendships with the intellectual elite in Lima, he retained his enthusiasm for simple people from the Andean region. To have the opportunity to meet a person from a Peruvian province was enough to enlighten his day. When saying “eternal youth which I've only seen in men from our lands,” he implicitly shows identification with Mr. Alva because Arguedas was also a man from the provinces; therefore, the qualities he adjudges to Mr. Alva are also his qualities: transparence, kindness, and a joy that makes to seem like “eternal youth.”

Giving and receiving affection was probably his main motivation in life. According to his sister Nelly, he usually demanded affection from other people. Arguedas' sister recalls his brother's sensitivity in any emotional situation. One of the most devastating emotional events of his life was the divorce from his first wife. Nelly remembers her brother's words told to her when she tried to persuade him to reconsider his divorce:

¹⁰ “El Señor Alva me fue muy simpático. Es de esos señores de provincias que han podido conservar la pureza de su espíritu, y que tienen esa eterna juventud que sólo he observado en los señores de nuestras tierras. ¿Te acuerdas de don Ramón Escajadillo de San Juan? ¡Qué bien se está con ellos! Porque todo es transparente y lleno de bondad y alegría en sus conciencias.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, Jan. 19, 1944, in Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la PUCP, 1999), 169.

It's already too late now little sister, I beg you not to insist. Because of her [his wife], by trying to defend Celia, many of my friends have turned their backs on me. They don't speak to me anymore, even those who are my buddies. Until now my life has been a hell from which I want to be free; to be free from this kind of authoritarian, demanding and jealous mother, that Celia has been...¹¹

It seems that in his relations with women, Arguedas looked for protection. His first marriage, which lasted almost 30 years, was more a relation between a protective and dominant mother figure and her son than a normal relation between a woman and a man. In several letters and testimonies Arguedas exacerbates his status as an orphan (*wakcha* in Quechua); as pointed out by Mercedes López-Baralt, the writer projected his biographical predicament of having been an orphan onto his marginal condition between the two worlds, Andean and occidental, constructing himself as an agonizing and living bridge.¹² It was not coincidental that the writer also considered his psychoanalyst a mother figure, to the extent that he called her "mother" as we can see in the following excerpt:

I'm leaving tomorrow, strengthened by your hands, almost saved from seas of pain. With your invaluable hands, great mother who loves those who suffer, you've lifted me up. I won't forget you. In your name and that of Beatriz I'll work like a renewed young boy. Gaby was also by my side, as if [standing] before a wounded brother.¹³

Here Arguedas expresses his need for support not only from his psychoanalyst but also from other important women in his life at that time. Beatriz refers to a woman with whom he had

¹¹ "Ya es muy tarde hermanita, te ruego no insistas. Por culpa de ella, por intentar defender a Celia, muchos de mis amigos me han dado la espalda. No me dirigen la palabra, incluso siendo compadres míos. Mi vida hasta ahora ha sido un infierno del cual quiero liberarme; liberarme de la especie de madre autoritaria, absorbente y celosa que he tenido en Celia..." Testimony of Nelly Arguedas in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 321.

¹² Mercedes López-Baralt, "La Orfandad Andina de José María Arguedas," *Actas XII (1995) AIH*, Centro Virtual Cervantes, http://cvc.cervantes.es/literatura/aih/pdf/12/aih_12_7_009.pdf, 43.

¹³ "Me voy mañana, fortalecido por tus manos, de los mares de dolor casi salvado. Con tus manos invalorable, gran madre que amas a los que sufren, me has levantado. No he de olvidarte. En tu nombre y en el de Beatriz trabajaré como un mozo renovado. También Gaby estuvo a mi lado, como ante un hermano herido" José María Arguedas, Santiago, Chile to Lola Hoffmann, Santiago, Chile, Apr., 1962, in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 73.

a brief romance in Chile in 1962 and Gaby Heneike was a Chilean friend that he considered like a sister. He usually stayed at her home when traveling to Chile.

The relationship Arguedas had with his real sister, Nelly, was also a mother-son relationship. It was probably because Nelly replaced a mother's love Arguedas lacked during his childhood that he considered his sister like a mother, even though she was younger than him and they first met when they were adults. Nelly was one year old when their father died and Arguedas was eighteen. She was raised by their aunt Zoila Peñafiel and was not able to meet her older brothers until many years later. However, she knew about José María and Arístides, the oldest brother. She finally met José María in Lima in 1957 when he was working at the Casa de la Cultura.

Yolanda López Pozo, Arguedas' cousin, in her testimony about him, also recalls a very sensitive person, who constantly needed to be loved and protected. Yolanda remembers the writer saying about her mother, Rosa Navarro, that she was "like the mother he never met" and that Arguedas treated her as a little sister.¹⁴ She recalls how contagious his laughter was and that he was never absent in any party that she and her mother organized. Arguedas liked to play the guitar and sing very emotive *waynos* because he was indigenous.¹⁵ Yolanda defines her cousin saying:

He was pure; he seemed like a child, hungry for tenderness and love. (...) Those, I believe, are the two faces of José María Arguedas that I remember well, faces of joy and also melancholy. The tender and loving man who had fun in our intimate parties, and the silent and tormented human being; the beloved cousin who could cry and laugh with similar intensity.¹⁶

¹⁴ Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 396.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 399.

¹⁶ "Él era puro, parecía un niño, hambriento de ternura y amor. (...). Esas, creo, son las dos caras de José María Arguedas que recuerdo bien, caras de gozo y también de melancolía. El hombre tierno y cariñoso que se divertía en nuestras fiestas íntimas, y el ser humano silencioso y atormentado; el primo querido que podía llorar y reír con similar intensidad." Testimony of Yolanda López Pozo in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 400.

Throughout the interviews I undertook with some of Arguedas' friends, I also realized that for several of my interviewees Arguedas sustained these two faces of intense melancholy and happiness. He was especially enthusiastic when he met someone that knew Quechua or liked to sing and dance to folkloric music. For example, the anthropologist and Arguedas' former student, Rodrigo Montoya, told me that once the writer knew that Montoya was from Puquio (a town where Arguedas lived when he was a child) and enjoyed singing Quechua songs, and was very happy, inviting Montoya to sing with him.¹⁷

In his condition as a *wakcha*, his relationships with women were an important part of Arguedas' life. He had several women in his life but probably the most intense and longest affective connection he had was that which he had with the Bustamante sisters; one of them (Celia) became his wife. He met the Bustamante sisters, Alicia and Celia, seven years after he moved to Lima. This happened in the "Pancho Fierro" *peña* (a gathering place similar to a bar) which Alicia Bustamante founded in 1936. Arguedas was twenty-four at that time. This *peña* was a gathering place for artists and intellectuals. There, Arguedas met with his friends from San Marcos University, such as Manuel Moreno Jimeno and José Ortiz Reyes. During his stay in jail from 1937 to 1938, Arguedas received frequent visits from Celia Bustamante, and when he left jail he married her in June of 1939, moving to Sicuani, Cuzco, where he was a teacher at a public school. Celia, her sister Alicia, and Arguedas shared common interests and beliefs related to art, politics and society. After Arguedas married Celia a tight bond was created among the three of them.¹⁸ The sisters, even though they were from Lima, felt that Andean culture was important for the development of Peru. This political project fit perfectly with Arguedas' literary project, since he

¹⁷ Rodrigo Montoya, oral history interview by author, Lima, Peru, July 14, 2010

¹⁸ Carmen María Pinilla, ed. *Apuntes Inéditos: Celia y Alicia en la Vida de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2007), 24-26.

was always interested in promoting Andean culture. He was also attracted to the sisters when he realized they followed the socialist ideas of José Carlos Mariátegui. Belonging to the intellectual elite in Lima and being a socialist in favor of indigenous people at the same time was something unusual in Peru in the 1930's. Arguedas admired these strong and decisive women who helped him make contact with the intellectual elite in Lima.

But the connection with his wife and sister-in-law was more than intellectual. Arguedas depended upon them for the emotional support he could not receive from his parents. Having lost his mother at three and his father when he was twenty, the writer experienced a feeling of abandonment. In a letter he wrote to his wife, he tells her that

You are my chosen wife, but there is perhaps in me a certain deep tenderness, possibly infantile, like that look of a creature my old man had; that's surely something abnormal; a part of my spirit that hasn't been able to grow, it remained from when I was a child, and I believe that you haven't been able to adapt your character to acts that come out of that part of my being. (...) You occupied the place of my father, and not only you but also Ali, and not only since we married. When that happened with Adela, I felt as if I was abandoned those days. You haven't perhaps come to understand completely how much I need you and I need Ali. But there are some necessities of mine that relate to my mode of being, to this character of mine, that at times you haven't been able to give me ...¹⁹

In this letter written around 1944, after five years of marriage, we can see the demands of affection and protection Arguedas makes on his wife: "there are some necessities of mine that relate to my mode of being, to this character of mine, that at times you haven't been able to give me." As explored in Chapter 1, he portrayed himself as a child with a tremendous need for protection. He was always looking for mother and father substitutes. When he was a child, those

¹⁹ "Ocupaste el lugar de mi padre, y no solo tú sino también Ali; y no solo desde que nos casamos. Cuando lo de Adela, me sentía esos días como abandonado. Tú acaso no has llegado a comprender del todo cómo te necesito y necesito a Ali. Pero hay algunas necesidades mías que corresponden a mi modo de ser, a este carácter mío, que a veces tú no has podido darme. Y por eso hemos tenido horas de amargura y violencia que fueron acumulándose y nos dieron instantes muy malos. Pero somos gente que puede enmendarse y señalarse un rumbo." José María Arguedas, Churín, Perú, to Celia Bustamante, Lima, Perú, (no date, probably 1944), in Pinilla, ed., *Apuntes Inéditos*, 124.

who played this role where indigenous people; as an adult, he looked for protection in women and friends.

Love was a main source of inspiration for him. However, his first marriage had several crises, which probably led him to look for affection in other women; yet he never completely broke the strong bond he had with her first wife. In a letter he wrote to his wife he tries to justify his relationships with other women:

Remember that I completely forgot the young woman from Apata. But she helped me to pick up the thread of *Deep Rivers*. There I restarted and continued writing it nonstop, like with *All the Bloods*, after the stimulus, [and] completely rid of Beatriz. Sybila doesn't inspire me at all.²⁰

He associates in this letter the drive of his creative writing to some women with whom he had a love relationship. "The lady from Apata" was Vilma Ponce, an Andean woman, who apparently gave him the motivation to finishing his novel *Deep Rivers* in the mid-fifties; Beatriz was a Chilean platonic love he had in early 1960s when he was writing *Todas las Sangres* [All the Bloods]. It is interesting to note that this letter was written in 1965 when he had taken another Chilean lover, Sybila, who became his second wife in 1967, but in his words, their relationship did not create the inspiration he was looking for in his love for writing. This contrasts with the words he dedicated to his lover Vilma Ponce in 1955: "You are my people, my earth, the birds' song that I heard in my childhood. I need a lot of tenderness; write me more often."²¹ The way he describes his lover and implores her affection is very corporeal and stimulate the senses: she is the earth, the

²⁰ "Acuérdate de que olvidé por completo a la joven de Apata. Pero ella me auxilió a retomar el hilo de Los Ríos Profundos. Allá lo reempecé y seguí escribiéndolo de seguido, como Todas Las Sangres, luego del estímulo, completamente extinguido de Beatriz. Sybila no me inspira nada." José María Arguedas, Santiago, Chile to Celia Bustamente, Lima, Perú, Jul. 1965 in Pinilla, ed., *Apuntes Inéditos*, 350.

²¹ "Eres mi pueblo, mi tierra, el canto de las aves que oí en mi niñez. Necesito mucho de ternura; escíbeme con más frecuencia." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Vilma Ponce, Huancayo, Perú, no date (probably June 1955), in Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en el Valle del Mantaro* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2004), 154-155.

birds' song he listened to in his childhood. Indeed, this relationship offered him more than affection; it offered the chance to reconnect again with the landscape of his childhood.

Besides his first wife and his lover Vilma Ponce, the third love relationship that profoundly marked Arguedas' life was the one he had with his second wife, Sybila Arredondo. This relationship was also conflictive and could not fulfill his expectations of support and protection that he always searched for in women. In a letter he wrote to his brother in 1969, the year of his suicide, he complains about his wife's abandoning him in the moment when he needed her most because he needed to travel to Santiago to finish his last novel:

In the most incomprehensible way Sybila didn't want to come this month to Santiago, despite the fact that for a carpet her mother gave her as a gift and that she didn't like and had dumped it somewhere and it wasn't used even as the cat's bed, an aunt of hers would pay her 3000 escudos, \$750. I brought the carpet and gave it to the aunt. With that money the trip was financed. (...) For that reason I had a real guerilla war of letters more and more absurd in respect to the content of Sybi's responses, and more astonished and painful on my part. (...) The psychiatric doctor (Pedro León Montalbán) knows Sybi pretty well and had a talk with her for over an hour. She sent some money with him, because during those ten months I lived only on author's rights. Well, the Dr. surprisingly confirmed the explanation that Sybi's best friends here, who are also my best friends, said was the case. (...) They said that what Sybi was trying to do was torment me a bit because maybe it irritates her as my fame increases. This seems to me totally monstrous and unacceptable. The doctor confirmed it. That seems to be the truth, an insane and fatal truth. The Dr. says that, in the end, Sybi is a frustrated woman and with an overbearing ambition to be prominent. But I gave her the chance to advance in Lima and encouraged that ascent.²²

²² "De la manera más incomprensible Sybila no quiso venir este mes a Santiago (...). Con este motivo tuve una verdadera guerrilla de cartas cada vez más absurda en cuanto al contenido de las respuestas de Sybi y más asombrado y dolorido de mi parte. (...) El Dr. (Pedro León Montalbán) psiquiatra conoce bastante a Sybi y tuvo una charla de más de una hora con ella. Me envió con él un dinero, porque durante estos diez meses he vivido sólo de derechos de autor. Bueno, el Dr. Confirmó sorprendentemente la explicación que aquí dieron al caso los mejores amigos de Sybi que también son mis mejores amigos. (...) Ellos decían que lo que Sybi pretendía era martirizarme un poco porque a lo mejor mi fama la molestaba. Esto me pareció totalmente monstruoso e inadmisible. El doctor lo ha confirmado. Esa parece ser la verdad, una verdad loca y fatal. Dice el Dr. Que, en el fondo, Sybi es una mujer frustrada y con una ambición avasalladora de figurar. Pero yo le di la oportunidad de ascender en Lima y fomenté ese asenso." José María Arguedas, Valparaíso, Chile, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, Aug. 1969, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia*, 282-284.

This excerpt shows the strong plea for affection Arguedas desired from his second wife, a plea that was not reciprocated in the way he required. He could not understand why his wife did not want to travel to Santiago to help him to finish his novel and felt confused by the explanation given by one of his psychiatrists, Dr. León. The strong independence of his second wife bewildered him because he was used to traditional gender roles. Probably for this reason he never completely broke the affectionate bonds he had with his first wife. Even after his formal divorce in December of 1967 he wrote to Celia Bustamante:

I dream a lot about you, very tenderly and at times in a terrible way. I'm a child to whom life, fiercely, marvelously, makes him live with the very big eyes and ears of an adult. I ask you to keep the beautiful calm I felt in your voice over the telephone. Let that be the plan.²³

To his first wife, he presented himself as a “child ... with very big eyes and ears of an adult.” This metaphoric expression shows an implicit vulnerability; he sees and listens to more than his childhood soul could bear. He needs to feel safe, in harmony. The voice of his former wife conveyed calm to him, at least at that moment. Considering the lack of affection Arguedas had as an orphan, it was impossible for him to completely break the dependency relationship he had with Celia.

His concern about love and how to reach it is a topic that usually shows up in the letters he exchanged with his psychoanalyst, Lola Hoffman. Arguedas considered that there is no other thing that would be more inspiring in life than love and affection. In a letter from 1962, he states: “What

²³ “Te sueño mucho, muy tiernamente y a veces en forma terrible. Soy un niño a quien la vida, ferozmente, maravillosamente, le hace vivir con ojos y oídos muy grandes de adulto. Te pido mantener la hermosa calma que sentí en tu voz por teléfono. Que esa sea la Pascua.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Celia Bustamante, Lima, Perú, Dec. 1967, in Pinilla, ed., *Apuntes Inéditos*, 370.

I long for is to be loved in a pure sense; my doctor was right when he told me that purely intellectual stimuli don't influence me anymore.”²⁴

Once again Arguedas' demand for love is clear. When he received it as he expected he suddenly became more interested in finishing his projects. Love and affection were always connected to his process of writing.

One of the main reasons he had for going to Chile was to find the emotional support necessary to write. He found in Chile the loving, peaceful atmosphere that he could not find then in Peru. In the same letter he emphasizes the influence that the city of Santiago exerts over his mood: “In Santiago I again felt life; the happiness so long lost. I felt the sun, nature; I was hungry again.”²⁵ More than Chile the country, it was the people, friends, lovers and mainly his psychoanalyst in Chile where he found the emotional support to continue writing. Arguedas' capacity for writing diminished significantly in the last period of writing his final novel. This is evident in one of the letters he writes to Lola Hoffmann:

Tonight was awful with anguish and last night too. I just finished outlining the contents of the nine chapters that I'm still missing. I have a hard tightness in the back of my neck and not so much discouragement. But yesterday afternoon I felt afraid, because the tightness, for more than an hour, made me very stiff and put me in a half-light of depression and a ferocious collapse. If I start to write it'll go away, but to start I need the back of my neck to give me support and not [a feeling] of emptiness.²⁶

²⁴ “Lo que ansío es ser amado con pureza; mi médico acertó cuando me dijo que los estímulos puramente intelectuales ya no influyen en mí.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Lola Hoffman, Santiago, Chile, Jan. 6, 1962, in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 69.

²⁵ José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Lola Hoffman, Santiago, Chile, Jan. 6, 1962, in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 70.

²⁶ “La noche fue atroz de angustiada y también anoche. Acabo de trazar el contenido de los nueve capítulos que me faltan. Tengo opresión dura a la nuca y no tanto desánimo. Pero la tarde de ayer tuve miedo, porque la opresión, durante una hora más, me tuvo muy agarrotado y en una penumbra de depresión y hundimiento feroz. Si empiezo a escribir se me pasará, pero para empezar necesito que mi nuca me sirva de apoyo y no de vacío.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Lola Hoffman, Santiago, Chile, (no date, probably between July-September, 1969), in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 221.

He wrote this letter when he was trying to finish his last novel. The process of writing it was also therapeutic and it was with the help of his psychoanalyst that he could continue writing as he says in this other letter:

I don't think there's a middle ground. Lola: *The Foxes* were born and grew up somewhat like your masterpiece much more than *Todas Las Sangres*, which is considered a classic in Hispanic literature. *The Foxes* were born from their own ashes; you transformed the ash into fire.²⁷

The dramatic and agonistic tone he uses to describe the debt he had to his psychoanalyst for helping him to finishing his last novel reflects the agonistic tone in which this novel was written as we can read at the beginning of his *Last Diary*:

Either I have been struggling with death or else I think I have been struggling with death at quite close quarters while writing this intermittent, plaintive tale. The few allies I had were protected by my own flesh. This uneven tale is the image of that uneven struggle.²⁸

The internal struggle Arguedas had to confront to finish *The Foxes* was both a defeat and a success. A defeat because he ultimately ended it by taking his life, but a success because, even formally unfinished, his last novel crowned him as an avant-garde writer who could foretell the challenges Peru would have to confront because of internal migration.

Besides women in his life, his relationships with friends were also very important for him. He not only insisted on affection but gave it in full back to his friends. Even in his moments of depression, he liked to encourage his friends. For example, when one of his friends, José Ortiz Reyes, wrote some literary pieces, Arguedas celebrated it with enthusiasm, encouraging his friend

²⁷ "Creo que no hay un término medio. Lola: los Zorros nacieron y crecieron algo como una obra maestra suya mucho más que Todas las Sangres, considerada ya como obra clásica de la literatura hispanoamericana. Los Zorros han nacido de las propias cenizas; usted convirtió la ceniza en fuego." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Lola Hoffman, Santiago, Chile, Jul. 16, 1969, in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 212.

²⁸ José María Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, 256.

to continue with his literary vocation despite that he was studying law. When Ortiz Reyes was still in prison, Arguedas wrote him a letter on September 1938 referring to the quality of his literary work:

You suffer from a serious flaw: you underestimate yourself too much; your self-criticism is exaggerated and unfair. (...). I beg you sincerely to continue writing; you know I speak to you honestly; I don't speak to you as a prisoner, but as a man who has the obligation to write what he feels, because he will do a good for humanity; it doesn't matter the size of the good you do. I know it will be enough.²⁹

This demonstrates Arguedas' solidarity with his friend. Both being writers, he could have been more selfish and remained concerned only for his own success. Another friend, Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, son of José Ortiz Reyes, also had a special relationship with Arguedas since he was a child. In his testimony, Ortiz Rescaniere confesses that after Arguedas' death, he never liked to talk about him, but only after several years and with the publication of Arguedas' letters, did he consider that the appropriate time had arrived.³⁰ Ortiz Rescaniere explains that his first memories about Arguedas go back to when he was four years old and he used to visit Arguedas' home with his parents. Ortiz Rescaniere then did not see Arguedas for a number of years, but their friendship was reinitiated when he wanted to study anthropology and Arguedas again became very close to him. He advised Ortiz Rescaniere not only about his academic future but also about his personal life. The writer played the role of a second father, a friend, and a mentor for him. Ortiz Rescaniere remembers Arguedas as a very warm person with a good sense of humor and irony, and as a good teller of jokes. He recalls, for example, that even when Arguedas told him about his first suicide

²⁹ "Tú padeces de un grave defecto: te subestimas demasiado; tu autocrítica es exagerada e injusta. (...). Yo te ruego sinceramente que sigas escribiendo; tú sabes que te hablo honradamente; no te hablo como a preso, sino como a un hombre que tiene la obligación de escribir lo que siente, porque hará un bien a la humanidad; no importa el tamaño del bien que se hace. Yo sé que será bastante." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to José Ortiz Reyes, Lima, Perú, Sep. 1938, in Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas, Recuerdos de una Amistad* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 45.

³⁰ Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 171-199.

attempt, he made fun of himself while telling the story. The only time that Ortiz Rescaniere recalls a melancholic and serious Arguedas was some days before his death. On that occasion, even though Arguedas was dancing at a party, Ortiz Rescaniere recalls that he did not have his usual sense of humor. Because, contrary to the image of melancholy that many people may have about Arguedas, he, in fact, had an intense way of laughing and a great sense of humor. Indeed, Máximo Damián, a Quechua speaking violinist and Arguedas' friend, told me that he does not remember Arguedas being sad yet he always had the temperament for laughing and telling jokes in Quechua.³¹

Even though the relationship Arguedas had with Ortiz Rescaniere was like a father and son, Arguedas never attempted to replace his real father, José Ortiz Reyes. Arguedas knew how important it is to have a good relationship with a father as he would have liked to have had with his own father. Sometimes, Arguedas interceded and gave advice to his young friend. For example, in a letter on March 12, 1966 he says to Alejandro Ortiz:

Look Aliocha: I think there's no better friend and physician for you than your father. I go around kind of off the tracks emotionally since I lost my own father when I was 20 years old. You know that at that time I was living on the street and some days I had to sleep on the park benches of 'Dos de Mayo' Hospital.³²

Arguedas did not want his young friend to suffer as he did because of his father's absence. He probably thought that his friend did not appreciate the fact that his father was alive and wanted

³¹ Máximo Damian, oral interview by author, Lima, Perú, August 18, 2009.

³² "Mira Aliocha: creo que no hay mejor amigo y médico para ti que tu padre. Yo ando algo descarriado, emocionalmente, desde que perdí al mío, a la edad de 20 años. Tú sabes que entonces me quedé en la calle y tuve que dormir unos días en las bancas de la plaza del hospital Dos de Mayo." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, Paris, France Mar. 12, 1966, in Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 206.

to convey his own personal experience to help his friend understand that even with some disagreements a father can have with his son, nonetheless, a father is irreplaceable.

In his demand for love, in the absence of his wife, Arguedas looked for support in his friends. For example, in a letter to the poets and friends, Moreno Jimeno and Emilio Westphalen, Arguedas confesses that he is overwhelmed by his emotions and asked for their advice:

Dear brothers, you already know that I'm a sentimental [guy] and that sometimes I can hardly contain my emotions; this is why you would excuse the emotion in these words. But now that I don't have "la Rata" with me, I'm alone, [and] to her I could have told her all that I'm feeling at this moment; she would be able to calm me down and would have shared with me the enthusiasm that I have, and together we would have had a beautiful moment.³³

La Rata was his nickname for his wife, Celia. At that moment, Arguedas was teaching in a public high school for indigenous children in Sicuani, Cuzco. This "impossibility of containing his emotions" was because, as he continues explaining in the letter, one of his indigenous students wrote a very good poem in Spanish. The surprise for Arguedas was that this boy did not even know how to speak in Spanish at the beginning of the course, and ended up learning to read poets such as Moreno Jimeno and Westphalen, to whom he was writing this letter. Arguedas was extremely happy about this and wanted to have someone he loved to share his excitement. Not being with his wife at that moment, he wrote to his friends and also asked them for their opinion.

Years later, when he knew that his friend Adolfo Westphalen was going to return to Peru from Europe, Arguedas wrote him expressing his happiness at his return. We should note

³³ "Queridos hermanos ya ustedes saben que soy un sentimental, y que a veces muy difícilmente puedo contener mis emociones, por eso sabrán dispensar la emoción de estas palabras. Pero ahora que no tengo a la Rata, estoy solo, a ella hubiera podido decirle todo lo que en este instante siento; ella me habría calmado y hubiera compartido conmigo el entusiasmo que tengo, y juntos habríamos tenido un hermoso instante"³³
José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú to Adolfo Westphalen and Manuel Moreno Jimeno, Lima Perú, Aug. 10, 1941, in Inés Westphalen Ortiz, *El Río y El Mar. Correspondencia José María Arguedas/Emilio Adolfo Westphalen* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011), 82.

here the use of the words “protect” and “shelter” to describe how he felt in regard to his friendship.

Arguedas looked upon him not only in friendship but for protection:

I was waiting for the oppression that I'm suffering with to clear up a bit to write you. But it's increased. And last night at Gody's there was talk of you possibly returning to Lima. I realized then that I've let an eternity pass since I wrote you a letter. The news of your return, while improbable, caused us to react; Gody and I used almost identical words, at the same time, to express our feelings; I used “protect” and he “shelter.” It's that we see in you a kind of big brother, very strong, despite everything.³⁴

Gody is the nickname for Fernando de Szyszlo, a well know contemporary Peruvian painter, who at that time belonged to the writer's circle of friends. Even though Arguedas is including Szyszlo in his need for protection (“Gody and I”), this can simply be his own projection about his friend; in any case this plea of protection is a constant within his correspondence.

But it was not only protection that he looked for in his friends but also identification. While he felt close to all his friends, it was probably with Manuel Moreno Jimeno and Pedro Lastra with whom he identified most. Moreno Jimeno was his best friend in his youth and Pedro Lastra in the last years of his life, both of them poets. One an Andean Peruvian and the other Chilean, but what they had in common was the simplicity, kindness and authenticity Arguedas valued. In a letter to Lastra, he writes:

I was formed in the countryside; I wasn't able to master a complex knowledge of the city; the anguish that the old pain of the people and the greatness and tenderness of the Andean landscape produced in my childhood, sustained a “naivety” within me that's the source of my sorrow and my strength. You, on the contrary, have always fought with men from the city and have been forced to read a lot. However, the pureness of your being appears

³⁴ “Estuve esperando que la opresión de la que sufro se disipara un poco para escribirte. Pero ha ido aumentando. Y anoche donde Gody se habló de tu posible regreso a Lima. Me di cuenta, entonces, que he dejado transcurrir una eternidad desde que recibí tu carta. La noticia de tu vuelta, aunque improbable, nos hizo reaccionar; Gody y yo, usamos palabras casi idénticas, al mismo tiempo, para expresar nuestros sentimientos; yo utilicé “proteger” y él “amparar.” Es que vemos en ti a una especie de hermano mayor, muy fuerte, a pesar de todo.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Adolfo Westphalen, Paris, France, Feb. 27, 1956, in Inés Westphalen, comp., *El Rio y el Mar*, 114.

absolutely incorruptible and I feel it is founded in the respect [you have] for the principles which are the same that support me, or that I believe are the same.³⁵

Aware of the differences between Lastra and himself, he was happy to share his ethical values with his friend. When saying “the pureness of your being appears absolutely incorruptible” implies an admiration for his friend’s authenticity. This year I had the opportunity to interview Pedro Lastra. He told me that he could define his friend as a gentleman and that what Arguedas valued more in people in general, especially in writers, was authenticity. As is known, in his last novel Arguedas made a distinction between professional writers and writers for vocation; when I asked Lastra why he made that distinction, he answered:

The idea of a professional writer he saw as an artifice, for him literature was a thing lived, vital, in which a vision of the world and of the people was revealed. He didn’t value conspicuous resources that could attract attention, but that distanced the writer from what is human (as he understood it). Beauty as perfection didn’t interest him, but [instead] the community of human beings. So for example, he liked to quote a lot some verses of Washington Delgado: *To live tomorrow I have to be a part/of reunited men./A flower I have in my hand, a day/sings in my interior the same as a man.*³⁶

Thus, according to Lastra, Arguedas valued a sense of belonging to a community and to the human condition; for him, the purpose of writing should not be separated from the purpose of life – solidarity.

As with Lola Hoffman, Lastra also offered emotional support to the writer when he traveled to Santiago. In a letter from 1963, he writes:

³⁵ “Yo me formé en el campo; no alcancé a dominar la compleja sabiduría de la ciudad; el desgarramiento que el antiguo dolor del pueblo y la grandeza y ternura del paisaje andinos produjeron en mi infancia, mantuvieron en mí una “ingenuidad” que es la fuente de mis sin sabores y de mi fuerza. Tú, en cambio, has lidiado siempre con hombres de la ciudad y te ves obligado a leer mucho. Sin embargo, la pureza de tu ser aparece como absolutamente incorruptible y siento que ella se funda en el respeto a principios que son los mismos que a mí me sustentan, o que creo que son los mismos.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pedro Lastra, Santiago, Chile, Apr. 26, 1962 in Edgar O’Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 1997), 20.

³⁶ Pedro Lastra (Chilean Poet), oral interview by author, Lima, Perú, April 24, 2014.

I don't know how to express my affection for you. Never have I had the confidence in someone as the faith I feel for you. Allow me, brother, or permit me to tell you that I feel happy when I discover with pride that I'm somewhat like you. I'll work without suffering until the novel that I restarted in Santiago is finished. Here I'll recuperate my dangerously overshadowed creative possibilities because of the excess of suffering. You know, brother, that in large part I owe you this miracle, and to three other persons of which you only know one. I believe the only possible means to reward such love and energy that you [all] have unselfishly given me, which I almost desperately searched for, is to complete the novel.³⁷

At that time, 1963, Arguedas was writing *Todas las Sangres* at the same time as confronting a new crisis in his marriage which made it impossible for him to find the mental peace necessary for writing. As we have seen in another letter to his psychoanalyst, at that moment he was grateful to Lola Hoffmann, Beatriz (a platonic love) and Gaby Heneike for the support and motivation he needed for writing. The novel was finally published in 1964, yet Arguedas continued his internal battle until he finally decided to end his life. In a letter he wrote to John Murra, in which he updates his friend about his personal and academic life, he summarizes the reasons for his sensitive personality: "I was affected by a great pain during a period in which what one eats and sees converts itself into flesh; my food was sprinkled with an orphan's pain and tenderness."³⁸ As I revealed in earlier chapters, his memories of childhood, both endearing and tormented, would always remain within him and would ultimately determine all his future relationships with people. And, too, would ultimately bring him to close the last chapter of his life by his own hand.

³⁷ "No sé cómo expresarte mi afecto. Jamás he tenido por nadie la confianza, la fe que te profeso. Déjame, hermano, o permite decirte que me siento feliz cuando descubro con orgullo que en algo me parezco a ti. Trabajaré sin quebranto hasta concluir la novela que reinicié en Santiago. Aquí recuperaré mis posibilidades creadoras peligrosamente opacadas por el exceso de sufrimientos. Tú sabes, hermano, que en gran parte te debo a ti este milagro, y a tres personas más de las cuales solo a una conoces. Creo que la única forma posible de retribuir tanto amor y energías que Uds. me dieron con el desinterés que casi desesperadamente buscaba, es concluir la novela." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pedro Lastra, Santiago, Chile, March 22, 1963 in Edgar O'Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 71.

³⁸ "Yo fui tocado por un gran dolor en un periodo en que lo que uno come y ve se convierte en la parte de la materia carnal; mi comida estuvo espolvoreada de dolor de orfandad y de ternura." José María Arguedas, Lima Perú, to John Murra, May 3, 1967 in John V. Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, ed., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 155.

3.2 CHAPTER 5: RELATION WITH HIS ENVIRONMENT

In his letters, Arguedas describes himself as very attentive to his environment. Probably because of his early relation with Andean culture, he self-fashion himself as very close to nature and embedded in the sonority of the world, specially music. His condition of migrant also gave him a different approach to his environment. Each time he traveled to a different country he could not avoid to compare the placed he visited with his own country. This chapter has the purpose to analyze Arguedas' relation with his environment beyond his relation with people. He established a different type of relation with each country; furthermore, nature and music were always a referent for him. Considering the importance of his impressions about different countries, in the first section of this chapter I will analyze his relation with the countries he visited. In the second section I will focus on his relation with nature and music and how this relation allowed him to have a synesthetic communication with his environment.

3.2.1 Relation with Countries

The life and literary work of Arguedas have been marked by migration. Since early childhood he moved around different cities and towns in Peru. His process of migration was progressive from small towns to bigger cities until he finally set up in the capital, Lima. Later on, mainly for professional reasons, Arguedas had the opportunity to travel to different countries and some of them had an impact on his life. These trips inside and outside Peru not only enriched his geographical horizons but also his understanding of Peruvian society, which he portrayed in his literary work. From his first short stories, *Agua* (Water), to his final novel, *The Foxes*, the geographical set of each story changes from a small town in the Andes towards the complexity of

a port city on the coast. This increase in the complexity of the story and the geographical movement reflects his personal experience of migration. Analyzing his literary work, especially his last novel, Cornejo Polar proposes looking at the *migrant subject* as a new category for analyzing Arguedas' novels. He asserts:

It is not in vain that Arguedas defined himself as a permanent outsider and elaborated subtle and overwhelming considerations on what is called "outsiderism," that restless experience of being a man from various worlds, but in the end from none of them, and always existing – disconcertedly – on alien territory. I believe that in the light of his final novel, in which the semantic mark of migration is so evident, one can reread all of Arguedas' work in that same code (...). In this way, Arguedas' production could be defined as the exploit of a migrant.³⁹

In this section, we will review Arguedas' experience as an outsider in other countries. Even though the time he spent in various parts of the world was longer than in others, his impressions in some countries and regions like Chile, the United States, Europe, and Africa impacted greatly on his life.

Probably the most important country for Arguedas' life after Peru was Chile. Chile represented a refuge where he could find the mental peace to write, a peace that would not be possible to find in his own country. He needed to create some distance from Peruvian reality and the personal problems he had there. Chile also allowed him to be in direct contact with his psychotherapist, Lola Hoffmann. It is important to mention here that after the War of the Pacific between Chile and Peru in 1879, the relationship between Peruvians and Chileans has never been very good, however, during the 1960s and early 70s (the period Arguedas traveled to Chile), that

³⁹ "No en vano Arguedas se autodefinió como un forastero permanente y elaboró sutiles y agobiadas consideraciones sobre lo que llamaba el "forasterismo," esa desasosegante experiencia de ser hombre de varios mundos, pero a la larga ninguno, y de existir siempre -desconcertado- en tierra ajena. Creo que a la luz de su novela final, en la que es tan evidente la marca semántica de la migración, se puede releer toda la obra de Arguedas en esa misma clave (...). De este modo, cabría definir la producción de Arguedas como la gesta del migrante." Antonio Cornejo-Polar, "Condición Migrante e Intertextualidad Multicultural: El Caso de Arguedas." *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana*, XXI, 42 (1995): 101-109, quote in page 103.

country offered a positive atmosphere for socialist leaning intellectuals like Arguedas'. After the dictator Pinochet took over the government in Chile in 1973, the scenario changed dramatically and many intellectuals were exiled or murdered. Also, as Pedro Lastra, his Chilean friend told me, Arguedas likely idealized Chile because the group of friends who surrounded him there were his readers, who have read his novels and had a profound admiration for him, and offered him the affection and tenderness he always needed.⁴⁰

In the letters Arguedas wrote to Pedro Lastra, we can find emotional expressions on his relations with Perú and Chile and how these relationships affected his writing. In 1962 he writes to Pedro Lastra about Peru:

Peru is a country as beautiful and profound as it is cruel in these times. This barbaric fight was stimulating to me before, it inspired me; but after some very tough psychic problems that I couldn't overcome, I started to get depressed and what before propelled me, today discourages me.⁴¹

It is not the only time that Arguedas refers to Peru as a country where the beauty of nature is in discord with the unfairness of its society. In contrast, in the same letter he defines Chile as a paradise:

My ten day stay in Santiago was, for me, like being in paradise. There, you're not weighted with the uncontrollable resentments that here torture the common people and the middle class, especially the beastly scorn the "aristocratic" class and the wealthy have toward Indians and *cholos*.⁴²

⁴⁰ Pedro Lastra (Chilean Poet), interview by author, Lima, Perú, April 24, 2014.

⁴¹ "El Perú es un país tan bello, tan profundo como cruel en estos tiempos. Esta lucha bárbara me resultaba estimulante antes, me inspiraba: pero luego de unos problemas psíquicos muy duros que no pude vencer, empecé a deprimirme y lo que antes me impulsaba hoy me desalienta." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pedro Lastra, Santiago, Chile, Feb.8, 1962 in Edgar O'Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra* (Santiago de Chile: LOM Ediciones, 1997), 16.

⁴² "Mi estadía de diez días en Santiago fue para mí una estadía en el paraíso. Allí no están Uds. Cargados de los irrefrenables resentimientos que aquí atormentan al pueblo y a la clase media, especialmente el bestial desprecio de las clases "aristocráticas" y ricas por indios y cholos." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pedro Lastra, Santiago, Chile, Feb.8, 1962 in Edgar O'Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 16. 'Cholos' is a term that refers to mix race people in Perú and may be used in a pejorative way.

He may also sustain this “paradisiac” impression of Chile, aside from the affection he received there, because the racial contrasts there were not as evident as they were in other Andean countries such as Peru or Bolivia.

In the same year, but in another letter he writes to Lastra:

I also believe, maybe “naively,” though I base this on “objective” facts, that a man in Santiago is less bitter than one in Lima. I’ve told you to what I attributed this difference. In Peru, especially in Lima, life is an appalling cruelty, a brutality.⁴³

In Peru, 1962 was a year of presidential elections, and as usually occurs during elections periods in Peru, the atmosphere became conflictive and tense; the social contrasts of the country became more evident then. When he wrote this letter in 1962, the president in office was Manuel Prado Ugarteche, but in July of that year Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre from the APRA party won the elections. However, the military considered the election fraudulent and so a military coup took power until 1963, when Fernando Belaunde Terry was democratically elected. On the contrary, the political atmosphere in Chile was not as turbulent and this may have given him the impression that Chile was a quieter and more stable society. He acknowledges, though, that his impression about Chilean people could be “naïve.”

In 1963, he expresses gratitude to his friend Lastra for his companionship during the process of writing *Todas las Sangres*, yet this gratitude is not only for Lastra but for all the “brothers” he found in Chile who helped him to overcome the loneliness he felt in Peru, where he probably did not have the appropriate companions to talk to:

⁴³ “También creo, quizá “ingenuamente”, aunque me baso en hechos “objetivos” que el hombre de Santiago es menos amargo que el de Lima. Ya te dije a qué atribuía esta diferencia. En el Perú y, especialmente en Lima, la vida es de una crueldad, de una brutalidad espantosa.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pedro Lastra, Santiago, Chile, Apr. 26, 1962 in Edgar O’Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 20.

I just finished writing the 400th page of *All the Bloods*. I think that I'm truly at the midpoint of the work. But I've only had days with fever and I feel very low. Nevertheless, no day have I left without writing. I repeat once again to you, dear brother, that this enormous strength that I feel I owe to you [all] and especially to two women in Santiago. Life is like this! And for some there flow from special springs. I was feeling wiped out because of loneliness; now I have a community of brothers that accompany me inside: you especially ...⁴⁴

The "two women" he refers to are Lola Hoffmann and Beatriz. Thus, this country was synonymous with peace, affection and love for him. He could find there a "brotherhood," which gave him the support he needed.

In contrast to Chile, the United States was a country that inspired fear, respect, and admiration, but not affection. Even though he always had interest in traveling there, it took him more than ten years to get official embassy permission for the visa. In a letter written to his brother in 1951, he expressed his disappointment at losing an opportunity to go to the United States for a course required for this new opportunity:

Some very exceptional incidents happened to us, good and bad, during all this time. First I was just about to travel to the United States as I was suggested for the Dean of the Department of Social Sciences in the New Central Teacher's School that will be in operation next year in Chosica. Everything seemed set. The minister accepted my being named gladly, the director of the School holds me in high esteem, and everyone that had to be informed who are close to me praised me warmly. But in the end, the Ambassador of the United States vetoed me. This event made a very hard impression on me. I was going to earn an excellent salary and I could have done a good job, one for which I'm well prepared. And it ruined the project.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ "Acabo de escribir la cuartilla 400 de Todas las Sangres. Creo que estoy verdaderamente a la mitad de la obra. Pero he pasado solo días con fiebre y me siento muy decaído. Ningún día dejé, sin embargo de escribir. Vuelvo a repetirte, querido hermano, que esta inmensa fuerza que siento se lo debo a Uds. y especialmente a dos mujeres en Santiago. La vida es así! Y para unos brota de fuentes especiales. Yo estaba siendo aniquilado por la soledad; ahora tengo un pueblo de hermanos que me acompañan por dentro: tú especialmente..." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Pedro Lastra, Santiago, Chile, May. 20, 1963 in Edgar O'Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 36.

⁴⁵ "Nos han ocurrido sucesos muy excepcionales, malos y buenos, durante todo este tiempo. Primero estuve a punto de viajar a los Estados Unidos, pues fui propuesto para el Decanato del Departamento de Ciencias Sociales en la Nueva Escuela Normal Central que funcionará el año entrante en Chosica. Todo parecía seguro. El ministro aceptó mi designación de muy buen grado, el director de la Escuela me tiene una gran estimación, y todos los que debían informar acerca de mí lo hicieron elogiándome calurosamente. Pero al final, la Embajada de los Estados Unidos me vetó. Este suceso me causó una impresión muy dura. Iba a ganar un excelente sueldo y podía haber cumplido una

Losing the offer of being appointed the Dean at the main school for teacher education in Lima at that time, “La Escuela Normal Central,” was a hard blow for him. One of the requirements for occupying the position of Dean of the Department of Social Sciences at the Normal School of Education was to take a course in the United States. The Embassy of the United States probably denied him the visa for his affinity with the Peruvian leftist party. We should remember that this was the period of McCarthyism in the United States and that country had a “black list” of people suspected of links with communism.

In 1960, when Arguedas finished writing his novel *El Sexto*, which narrates his experience while he was in jail, he wrote a letter to his American friend John Murra expressing his concern about the effect the publication of this novel might have on his reputation in the United States because some of the characters in the novel were related to the mining company “Cerro de Pasco,” which was the most important investment of American capital in Perú but also a source of exploitation of local people.⁴⁶ He writes to Murra:

But I’ve already very much abused the esteem in which I hold you talking to you about my things. There’s only one detail that’s missing. The government of the United States will bury me even more on the black list after the publication of *El Sexto*, because one of the main characters is a miner from Morococha that talks about the horrors committed by the “*gringos*” during those years when there appeared on the door of the club the sign that said: “Entry prohibited to Peruvians and dogs.” There’s no hatred against the United States as a country in the book. It would be absurd, but against the Cerro de Pasco [mining company]

buena tarea, para la cual estoy bien preparado. Y se arruinó el proyecto.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Arístides Arguedas, Caraz, Perú, Aug. 2, 1951, in Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en Familia: Cartas de José María Arguedas a Arístides y Nelly Arguedas, a Rosa Pozo Navarro y Yolanda López Pozo* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1999), 220-221.

⁴⁶ American investors created The Cerro de Pasco Corporation, which emerged in 1902 and was for half a century the dominant power in Peruvian mining. By late 1960s, when the United States was criticized for its foreign policy, the company faced increasing opposition due to its unfair labor practices. See Saint Louis University Libraries Special Collections: Archives and Manuscripts, “Cerro de Pasco Corporation (1902-1974),” Saint Louis University Libraries Special Collections: Archives and Manuscripts, <http://archon.slu.edu/?p=creators/creator&id=47>

that had symbolized the United States almost exclusively in Peru, disgracefully, until the rise of the International Petroleum [Company] that has come to the fore.⁴⁷

Here, Arguedas is clear in emphasizing that he does not hate the United States as a country but is against the injustices committed by the Cerro de Pasco mining Company. However, he could finally travel to the United States in 1965, after his first suicide attempt, when the Peruvian Minister of Education interceded for him.⁴⁸ In another letter to Murra, he shows how pleased he is after he received the invitation to go to the United States:

Cadwell called me to give me the news that I was invited for a visit for two months to the United States. This news surprised me and I felt a very pleasant emotion; I stood before a courageous man by reason of his honesty and intelligence. I felt like some shackles had been taken off my feet. I have to make my own itinerary. I'll travel in April. I told Cadwell that I would ask you advice on the itinerary, the same with Carlos Cueto. What do you think about this news? I know that the "communists" will say that I've sold myself to Imperialism. None of that's important to me. I'm not sectarian; fortunately I've been able to free myself from all types of sectarianism, of these and of others, equally distorted: the one that comes from personal feelings of aversion. I try to judge objectively.⁴⁹

Now that the possibility of traveling to the United States was closer, Arguedas was also worried about the reactions of the Communist Party in Peru. But as is written in the letter, he was

⁴⁷ "Pero ya he abusado mucho de la estimación que le guardo hablándole de mis cosas. Me falta sólo un detalle. El gobierno de los Estados Unidos me hundirá aún más en la lista negra después de la publicación de *El Sexto*, porque uno de los personajes principales es un minero de Morococha que habla de los horrores cometidos por los "gringos" en aquellos años en que figuraba a la puerta de su club un letrado que decía: "Prohibida la entrada a los peruanos y a los perros." No hay odio contra los Estados Unidos como país en el libro. Sería absurdo, sino contra la Cerro de Pasco que ha simbolizado casi de manera exclusiva en el Perú a los Estados Unidos, desgraciadamente, hasta el auge de la International Petroleum que ha pasado ahora a primer plano." José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to John Murra, Nov. 21, 1960 in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, eds., *Las Cartas de Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 51.

⁴⁸ Note of the editor in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 110.

⁴⁹ "Me llamó Cadwell para darme la noticia de que me invitaba para una visita por dos meses a los Estados Unidos. Esta noticia me sorprendió y me produjo una emoción muy grata: estaba frente a un hombre valiente por razón de su rectitud e inteligencia. Sentí como que me quitaban unos grilletes de los pies. Debo hacer yo mi propio itinerario. Viajaré en abril. Le dije a Caldwell que te pediría consejos para el itinerario, lo mismo que a Carlos Cueto. ¿Qué te parece esta noticia? Yo sé que los "comunistas" dirán que me he vendido al imperialismo. Nada de eso me importa. No soy sectario; por fortuna he alcanzado a liberarme de todo tipo de sectarismo, de estos y de los otros, igualmente deformantes: el de las antipatías personales. Trato de juzgar con objetividad." José María Arguedas, Lima Perú, to John Murra, Oct. 28, 1964, in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, ed., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 110-111.

not “a sectarian” and considered himself free from any ideology. When he finally arrived in the United States, he shared his impressions with his friend Murra:

I walked for three hours in New York last night. Something new seethes in my spirit and my nerves. The contrast (in addition to that of Washington) is perhaps the most unnerving I’ve ever seen. Washington gave me the impression of the capital of an empire, a city that continues to grow as you look at it; all of it done in silence, of masses of buildings and spaces. A unique city which I didn’t understand at first sight.⁵⁰

Note the intensity in Arguedas’ description when visiting the most important cities in the United States: “Something new seethes in my spirit and my nerves.” He had not experienced before the grandiosity of these American cities, cities such as Washington that are made of “silence, of masses of buildings and spaces,” in contrast with most Latin American cities that – at that time – had narrow streets and were surrounded by noise more than by buildings. Furthermore, Arguedas was used to big spaces simply framed by nature and not buildings. His sensory experience when he arrived in the United States was something totally new that made him to change his perspective about seeing the world. In fact, in another letter to Murra he says:

The perspective of things and of the world changes when it’s considered from this country; I would say that becomes clarified much more. I said to Alberto Escobar that, as far as I can see, here all that’s been discovered through human ingenuity has been applied. They’ve taken advantage of technology to the maximum and the country so fabulously wealthy has produced riches that have caused a large part of the world’s wealth to run in this direction. I think it’s logical that the North American defends his way of living, but given that now what’s necessary to sustain him doesn’t only depend on the United States, he is in the

⁵⁰ “He caminado anoche tres horas por New York. Algo nuevo bulle en mi espíritu y en mis nervios. El contraste (complementario con Washington) es quizá lo más intranquilizador que he visto nunca. Washington me dio la impresión de la capital de un imperio, ciudad que va creciendo a medida que se la contempla; toda ella hecha de silencio, de masas de edificios y de espacios. Ciudad única a la que no entendí de primera vista.” José María Arguedas, New York, United States, to John Murra, Apr. 6, 1965 in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 121.

predicament of trying to impose norms on many other countries. Inevitable in Empires through all of history.⁵¹

This excerpt shows Arguedas' ideological independence and how his open mind helped him understand this country objectively, acknowledging its magnificence but also being aware of its economic power over other nations.

But what really connected with Arguedas was anything that stimulated his senses, music for instance. For this reason he was fascinated with New Orleans:

It was a good idea to send me to New Orleans. What a city! Last night for three hours I heard a jazz ensemble that Chase recommended at the last minute ... the fellow who played the metal bass was young and gringo. This luminous island in a neighborhood of indescribable obscenity, the great heart of the people I think are hardened by power and untiring eagerness apparently unstoppable for the accumulation of power. The United States constitutes, I believe, a colossal danger for Latin America but perhaps, but maybe the only road for its salvation.⁵²

As the same time that he acknowledges the tremendous threat the United States represented for Latin American countries because of it being a world power, he also appreciated its fabulous development and culture. However, at least in this excerpt, he is confusing governmental policies

⁵¹ "La perspectiva de las cosas y del mundo cambia cuando se la contempla desde este país; diría que se aclara mucho más. Le decía a Alberto Escobar que, aquí se ha aplicado, hasta donde puedo asegurar, todo lo descubierto por el ingenio humano. Se ha aprovechado al máximo la técnica, y el país tan fabulosamente rico ha producido riquezas que han hecho correr las de una gran parte del mundo hacia acá. Creo que es lógico que el norteamericano defienda su modo de vivir, pero como ya lo necesario para sostenerlo no solo depende de los Estados Unidos se ve en el aprieto de tratar de imponer normas a muchos otros países. Inevitable en los imperios de toda la historia." José María Arguedas, Bloomington, United States, to John Murra, Apr. 24, 1965, in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 122.

⁵² "Fue buena la idea de enviarme a New Orleans, ¡qué ciudad! Anoche escuché tres horas un conjunto de jazz que Chase me recomendó a última hora...el que tocaba el bajo de metal, era joven y gringo. En un barrio de una obsenidad indescriptible esta isla luminosa, el gran corazón de un pueblo creo que endurecido por el poder y el afán infatigable y aparentemente irrefrenable de acumular poder. Los Estados Unidos constituyen, creo, un peligro descomunal para América Latina pero acaso el único camino de su salvación." José María Arguedas, Texas, United States to John Murra, May.4, 1965, in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 124.

with the feelings of the people of the country when he says: “the great heart of the people I think hardening because of power.”

In other excerpt, he also complains about the lack of time to “live” in the United States:

The Universities of Cornell and Bloomington are gigantic. Nothing seems to be lacking; only that for a Latino all that feels too confined. Everyone is pressured for time. There isn’t time to live.⁵³

For Arguedas, the economic and material resources he found at American universities were not enough to be able to enjoy life. On the one hand, he experienced and felt doubts about the faster pace of American life typical of a cosmopolitan city like New York. On the other hand, he did appreciate the landscape of that city. In an article he wrote for a Peruvian newspaper, after his visit to New York he writes:

In New York eyes forget mountains and rivers, flowering shrubs, sonorous or deserted abysses, birds’ singing and men contemplating, absorbed or sad [and] in silence, their own heart. Amid that order of vastness among happy monsters that are bridges, prodigious roads, still or illuminated skyscrapers, man walks hurried, and I too walked affected at the rhythm of the others, but gazing at all that enormous artifice with an almost childlike enthusiasm. Manmade, that monster that should scare me just encouraged my faith, what power there is in the marrow and the human mind! And I looked for how in what part of the city I could place my hand [so I could] caress the city. I found no symbol that will represent it. Maybe that city doesn’t accept it, doesn’t know and [so] still rejects tenderness. And a good Latin American, from within, suspects – naively – that that giant rejects and probably will reject for a long time what it most needs.⁵⁴

⁵³ “Las Universidades de Cornell y Bloomington son gigantes. Nada falta aparentemente; sólo que para un latino eso se siente demasiado ajustado. Todos están apremiados de tiempo. No hay tiempo para la vida.” José María Arguedas, Texas, United States to John Murra, May.4, 1965, in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 125.

⁵⁴ “En Nueva York los ojos se olvidan de las montañas y de los ríos, de los arbustos floridos, de los abismos sonoros o desérticos, del canto de los pájaros y de los hombres que contemplan, absortos o tristes, en silencio, su propio corazón. Entre ese orden de lo desmesurado entre los monstruos felices que son los puentes, las prodigiosas carreteras, los rascacielos iluminados o quietos, el hombre camina apurado, y yo también caminaba contagiado, al ritmo que los otros, pero contemplando todo ese artificio descomunal con un entusiasmo casi infantil. ¡Obra del hombre, ese monstruo que debía asustarme solo estimulaba mi fe, lo que hay de poderoso en la médula y en la mente humana! Y buscaba cómo en qué parte de la ciudad, podía depositar mi mano para acariciar la ciudad. No encontré símbolo alguno que lo representara. Quizá esa ciudad no acepta, no conoce y aún rechaza la ternura. Y un buen latinoamericano, de adentro, sospecha –con ingenuidad– que ese gigante rechaza y probablemente rechazará por mucho tiempo lo que más necesita.” José María Arguedas, “New York y Quito,” *El Comercio*, October 17, 1965, Dominical Section.

Immersed in Andean beliefs, Arguedas considered all things as alive; therefore, he describes the city of New York with a human personality: “Maybe that city doesn’t accept it, doesn’t know and [so] still rejects tenderness.” He wanted to caress the city because it lacked affection, but in contrast to a Latin American town, in New York he could not find a place to offer his tenderness. Yet, he admired the city and his “faith” in humankind’s power increased.

As we will see in the next section, nature was a fundamental reference for Arguedas. Because of this, in any country he visited he usually related what he saw with his memories of the Peruvian landscape. For example, when he was in Europe to give a talk at UNESCO, he could not avoid comparing the complexity of that Peruvian landscape with the simplicity of the European. The beauty of the Peruvian natural environment gave him the strength to deal with the social problems of his country as expressed in one of his letters to his best friend Moreno Jimeno:

If Peru weren’t so beautiful our agony would be shorter [for] we would die or we would run away quickly! I tell you this last thing because yesterday I went by Unesco [with] three small films that I brought; we could accompany them with music that I also brought on record or tape. How incredible nature stands out, its incomparable beauty, after having traveled in this flat and uniform Europe. The same way that Europe is infinite because of its historic monuments Peru is [infinite] for its moving nature, and you know well all this immensity is welcoming and tender.⁵⁵

Proud of the natural beauty of Peru, Arguedas compares it to the historic monuments Europe has. Music and nature are what makes it possible to withstand the suffering produced for social injustice in Peru.

⁵⁵ “¡Si el Perú no fuera tan bello nuestra agonía sería más corta, y nos moriríamos o fugaríamos pronto! Te digo esto último, porque ayer pasé en la Unesco tres pequeñas películas que traje; pudimos acompañarlas con la música que también traje en discos y cinta. Cómo resalta la prodigiosa naturaleza, su incomparable belleza, después de haber recorrido esta Europa plana e uniforme. Así como en monumentos históricos Europa es infinita, el Perú es por su naturaleza, sobrecogedor, y bien sabes cómo toda esta inmensidad es acogedora y tierna.” José María Arguedas, Paris, France to Moreno Jimeno, July 6, 1958 in Roland Forgues, ed., *La Letra Inmortal*, 139.

Also, when he visited Germany and Austria, he was moved by the Rhine River and the Austrian forests, as he expressed in a postcard he sent to his friend José Ortiz Reyes:

The vision of Germany and Austria is perhaps more necessary for a Peruvian. They're dark countries, even despite their perfectly industrialized shell. I trembled with the Rhine and Salzburg. The forest has Mozart's music and something still wild. We'll talk soon.⁵⁶

When he says that "the forest has Mozart's music and something still wild" this may serve as a metaphor for a certain balance he perceived between culture and nature that has been preserved in these countries which contrasted very much from the Peruvian reality, where nature's beauty overwhelms the complexity of culture.⁵⁷

The European city that impressed him the most was Paris, to the point that he wrote a newspaper article about it. In a letter to his disciple and friend Alejandro Ortiz he mentions this article:

And I receive as something natural your affirmation that you're more a disciple of mine than of Levi-Strauss. You can arrive at becoming an authentic continuation and culmination of what I've done. And that would not have been possible without Paris. Have you read my published article in the supplement "El Comercio" and in reader (by Duviols) for teaching Spanish in France, that appeared under the title of "Paris and the Motherland." I wrote it just after arriving from Europe, from Paris, in 1960. I said what is happening [now] to you: In no place in the world does the [sense of] the motherland become so intense in each person as in Paris, when that motherland exists and with such a phenomenal density as [in] Peru⁵⁸

⁵⁶ "La visión de Alemania y Austria es acaso más necesaria para un peruano. Son países oscuros, aún a pesar de su cáscara perfectamente industrializada. Me he estremecido con el Rin y con Salzburgo. El bosque tiene música de Mozart y algo todavía bárbaro. Ya charlaremos." José María Arguedas, Viena, Austria, to José Ortiz Reyes, (Julio-Agosto de 1967?), in Alejandro Ortiz, ed., *Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 233.

⁵⁷ Raymond Williams analyzes the relation between the country and the city from an economic perspective. In his book Williams establishes the categories of "country" and "city" as cultural spaces. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁵⁸ "Y recibo como cosa natural tu afirmación de que eres más discípulo mío que de Leví-Strauss. Yo te he dado la médula. Tú puedes llegar a ser una auténtica continuación y culminación de lo que yo he hecho. Y eso no habría sido posible sin París. ¿Leíste mi artículo publicado en el suplemento "El Comercio" y en un libro de lectura (de Duviols) para la enseñanza del castellano en Francia, que apareció con el título de "París y la Patria." Lo escribí apenas llegado de Europa, de París, en 1960. Dije lo que te está pasando: En ningún lugar del mundo se intensifica más la patria en cada quien que en París, cuando esa Patria existe y con una densidad tan fenomenal como el Perú." José María Arguedas, Santiago, Chile, to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, Paris, France, (March 3, 1969?), in Alejandro Ortiz, ed., *Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 281-282.

This was written in 1969, in the last year of Arguedas' life, which was emotionally the most difficult for him. Still he had strong memories about the European city that inspired him and made him rethink the qualities of its own country. At that time, Alejandro Ortiz was in Paris finishing his PhD in Anthropology under the tutoring of Levi-Strauss. Arguedas encouraged his disciple to study in Paris for him to be able to receive the appropriate training needed to continue with his project for studying Andean communities and their oral traditions.

Here is an excerpt from the article in which he describes his impressions about Paris, where he describes a city still connected with nature:

In the Luxembourg Gardens and the Avenue de l'Observatoire, statues, forests, fountains, gardens, houses, palaces, pigeons and sparrows, are part of a kind of musical universe created to inspire, comfort, caress and shelter the human being to encourage and revitalize him, like the rivers and birds of the natural countryside, such as flowers and trees from uncultivated regions in whose contact the human spirit is renewed or seems to be renewed⁵⁹

In contrast to New York or Washington, Arguedas felt more responsive to Paris, a city which, in his eyes, was in some way musical and brought the natural world to the people of the city, both having the effect of lifting his own spirits. He writes that in places like Paris "the human spirit is renewed or seems to be renewed." At first sight the ambivalence of the last sentence may seem odd. But as we have seen earlier, ambiguity is a characteristic in Arguedas' self-portrayal. And because of his acute awareness of his own psychological problems, he may have considered that direct contact with nature was the best palliative for his emotional illness even if not a cure.

⁵⁹ "En el parque de Luxemburgo y en la avenida de L'Observador, estatuas, bosques, fuentes, jardines, casas, palacios, palomas y gorriones, son parte de una especie de universo musical creado para inspirar, consolar, acariciar y abrigar al ser humano, para alentarlos y vivificarlos, como los ríos y las aves de los campos naturales, como las flores y los árboles de las regiones incultas a cuyo contacto el espíritu humano se renueva o parece renovarse." José María Arguedas, "Paris y la Patria, *El Comercio*, December 7, 1958, Dominical Section, in *Katatay*, 1 (June 2005): 166-171, quote in 166-167.

Therefore, the last sentence may be interpreted as an unconscious reference to the possibility of never being able to alleviate the weight of his troubled spirit completely.

From the moment of his arrival in Paris, his connection with the city was evident to the extent that he very naturally learned to enjoy one of the most typical small pleasures of the city:

We now understand or know the reasons why the same day of our arrival in the city we stayed for nearly two hours at a cafe and discovered, surprised, that it really is pleasant to be overlooking the city or chatting over a cup of coffee. What before we'd considered something inexplicable and absurd.⁶⁰

Experiencing what it was like to contemplate Paris sitting at a café allowed him to realize how such everyday Parisian habits were fundamentally a healing experience inside a very busy world.

In 1958, when he was in Spain to finish his doctoral dissertation, Arguedas had the opportunity to travel to Morocco and his impression from Africa was totally different from what he had of Europe. He found Morocco to be similar to the Peruvian Andean regions:

Of Africa we'll talk personally. I'll only tell you that in Tetuan I was walking for seven hours barely holding back tears. It's not possible to imagine greater misery, a more strange and disquieting world, nor a people who would seem more worthy of human solidarity. I didn't remember anything; I didn't feel thirsty or hungry, fascinated and shaken by the Moorish sector of the city. I walked without stopping, pausing only for moments in front of shops and at artisans' caves, at preachers, beggars, singers and mosques, from ten thirty to five thirty. Without doubt that world has many similarities with that of the Indian [world] in our country, the more that time passes the more I love and miss it.⁶¹

⁶⁰ "Ahora comprendemos o conocemos las causas por las cuales el mismo día de nuestra llegada a la ciudad permanecemos durante casi dos horas en un café y descubrimos, sorprendidos, que de veras es placentero estar así, mirando la ciudad o charlando frente a una taza de café. Lo que antes habíamos considerado como algo inexplicable y absurdo." José María Arguedas, "Paris y la Patria, *El Comercio*, December 7, 1958, Dominical Section, in *Katatay*, 1 (June 2005): 166-171, quote in 168.

⁶¹ "De África hablaremos personalmente. Sólo te diré que en Tetuán estuve caminando siete horas conteniendo a duras penas las lágrimas. No es posible concebir mayor miseria, más extraño e inquietante mundo, ni un pueblo aparentemente más digno de la solidaridad humana. No me acordé de nada, no sentí sed ni hambre, fascinado y estremecido por el sector moro de la ciudad. Anduve sin parar, deteniéndome sólo instantes frente a las tiendas y a las cuevas de los artesanos, a los predicadores, mendigos, cantores y mezquitas, desde las diez y media hasta las cinco y media. Sin duda ese mundo tiene muchas semejanzas con lo indio de nuestro país, al que cuanto más tiempo pasa más lo amo y extraño." José María Arguedas, Bermillo de Sayago, Spain, to Emilio Westphalen, Paris, France, May 11, 1958 in Inés Westphalen, ed., *El Río y el Mar*, 178.

Arguedas reveals once again in this letter the emotionality of his language in describing a city that overwhelmed his senses and his social sensitivity, a synesthetic experience that he tries to convey in his correspondence. He describes his fascination saying that he “didn’t feel thirsty or hungry”; the overstimulation of his senses made him to feed himself with the beauty and social effervescence that remind him his hometown.

In next section we are going to focus more in deep in this overstimulation of his senses but through music and nature; and we will come to understand more clearly the way the writer connected with his world using a synesthetic form of communication.

3.2.2 Relation with Music and Nature

William Rowe, one of the Arguedian intellectuals who have study the role of music in Arguedas’ work, describes the subtlety Arguedas had in interacting and perceiving reality well. Rowe considers that: “All the work of Arguedas has an element of fine perception. A portion of this multiple work has to do with perceiving reality the finest way possible without [the interference of] great theories, dogmas, intellectual disciplines, the legacy of the past and the prejudices of language that prevent such fine perception.”⁶² This sensory and intuitive writing that characterizes Arguedas’ literary work was also applied to his letters. But before turning to the analysis of various letter fragments that illustrate this sensory manner of expression, we need to

⁶² “Toda la obra de Arguedas tiene un elemento de percepción muy fina. Una parte de ese trabajo múltiple tiene que ver con percibir la realidad del modo más fino posible sin que las grandes teorías, los dogmatismos, las disciplinas intelectuales, la herencia del pasado y los prejuicios del lenguaje impidan esa percepción muy fina.” William Rowe, “Arguedas: Una obra Múltiple en Amor y Fuego: José María Arguedas 25 años Después,” in *Amor y Fuego: José María Arguedas 25 años Después*, ed., Maruja Martínez and Nelson Manrique (Lima: DESCO, CEPES y SUR, 1995), 354.

understand certain concepts of the Andean world and how they influenced Arguedas' fundamental perception of the world.

The way in which he perceived reality was closely aligned to the Andean approach for comprehending the world, which he clearly internalized during his infancy by direct contact with the Andean communities nearest him, and later through his anthropological studies, often guided by an intuitive process.⁶³ Arguedas' literary writings show a narrator in solidarity with the Andean problematic, but also an Andean storyteller. Manuel Larrú offers a hypothesis: "... in the work of Arguedas the implicit author travels through a process of change at the representational level and, therefore, ideological. What we observe is that the point of view of the narrator/poetic I, built into its textual production, undergoes a shift from an indigenous narrator (more akin to a Western point of view that is in solidarity with another Indian) towards an Andean thought (a narrator /Andean poetic I who speaks about his culture not only as a denunciation, but in all its complexity)."⁶⁴ Therefore, Arguedas, through his work shows a way to see, feel and experience a world which is not Western. For example, an Andean concept that is apparent in Arguedas' writings is that of "living nature," or *kawsay*, which considers that there is no separation between the human being and the elements of the natural world; it is perceived as a form of communal interaction. In the

⁶³ Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, "Vigencia de la Obra de José María Arguedas," in *Arguedas la Dinámica de los Encuentros Culturales (Tomo III)*, ed., Cecilia Esparza (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2013): 15-19.

⁶⁴ "...el autor implícito en la obra de Arguedas transita por un proceso de cambio a nivel representacional y, por tanto, ideológico. Lo que observamos es que el punto de vista del narrador/yo poético, construido en su producción textual, pasa por un desplazamiento desde un narrador indigenista (más relacionado a un punto de vista occidental que se solidariza con otro indio) a un pensamiento andino (un narrador/yo poético andino que habla de su cultura ya no solo como denuncia, sino en toda su complejidad)." Manuel Larrú, "De una Visión Indigenista a una Visión Andina en la Obra de José María Arguedas", *Con Textos Revista Crítica de Literatura* 1 (2010): 11-28, quote on 11-12.

notion of *kawsay* space is not uniform, instead acknowledging places or locations that contain a higher energy force; they are seen as breaking points in space.⁶⁵

Another important concept of the Andean worldview reflected in Arguedas' writing is that the world is divided into complementary and opposing dual pairs (*yanatin*) that can become very complex combinations related to the structuring of time and space.⁶⁶ Thus, life and death are complementary and for the Andean person; death is not a termination but an access to another form of existence in the world. Federico García points out that "The sadness caused by the death of a loved one is mitigated by the belief that life continues, though not in a heaven or an abstract hell, according to Western tradition, but rather in a higher and concrete form, which in turn, will end in due course to begin again another cycle even greater and transcendental. This is why Andean people bury their dead in the company of singing and music."⁶⁷ We should recall that Arguedas made a request in his last diary, asking that Andean musicians play at his funeral: "In the voices of the charango and the quena, I shall hear everything," he said.⁶⁸ And indeed, as Arguedas asked, there were Andean musicians and songs sung at his funeral celebrating the beginning of a new cycle, the new cycle he announced in the last diary of his novel *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox of Down Below*. Regarding the relationship of man and nature that exists in the Andes, Federico García asserts:

⁶⁵ Manuel Larrú, "De una Visión Indigenista a una Visión Andina en la Obra de José María Arguedas," 22.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁷ "La tristeza que ocasiona la muerte de un ser querido es mitigada por el convencimiento de que la vida continúa, aunque no en un cielo o un infierno abstractos, según la tradición occidental, sino en otra forma superior y concreta que, a su vez, terminará a su tiempo para volver a comenzar en otro ciclo aún mayor y transcendental. Es por ello que el hombre andino entierra a sus muertos en la compañía del canto y de la música." Federico García and Pilar Roca. *Pachakuteq, Una Aproximación a la Cosmovisión Andina* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Pedagógico San Marcos, 2010), 67.

⁶⁸ José María Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, trans. Frances Horning Barraclough (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), 160.

Unlike Western metaphysics, man was not created in an image and likeness of God, and therefore is not the Lord and Master of the universe. He is only *Pachap churin*, in other words, the 'Son of the Cosmos', and therefore, debtor and tributary to his power. For Andean culture human beings are one more form of existence, not superior or inferior, but exactly equal to the infinite forms that life adopts in the harmony of worlds. He is worth as much as an insect, however insignificant it may seem, or the stone that falls from the mountain.⁶⁹

Embedded in this Andean world view, for Arguedas death was understood as part of a natural cycle that does not produce a superior type of life; and –considering what García states in the quote above—when human life ends it will become just part of the Cosmos, but transformed. Therefore, he used his suicide as metaphor of this renewal of Cosmos; his death would become the fuel for a “new historical cycle.”⁷⁰ This integration between human beings and their environment is a characteristic of oral societies similar to the Andean. Arguedas learned about the Andean cosmovision through oral communication with indigenous people. Therefore, *Orality* is another key element in understanding the Andean worldview. Authors such as Walter Ong note that in oral cultures the ear is imposed on the vision, and in these cultures there is further integration of all the senses.⁷¹ We should also take into account that in Latin America, writing prevailed as

⁶⁹ “A diferencia de la metafísica occidental, el hombre no ha sido creado a imagen y semejanza de Dios, y por consiguiente no es el amo y señor del universo. Es únicamente Pachap churin, es decir, “Hijo del Cosmos,” y por ello mismo, deudor y tributario de su fuerza. Para la cultura andina el hombre es una forma más, ni superior ni inferior, sino exactamente igual a las infinitas formas que adopta la vida en el concierto de los mundos. Vale tanto como un insecto, por insignificante que parezca, o la piedra que cae de la montaña.” Federico García and Pilar Roca, *Pachakuteq: Una Aproximación a la Cosmovisión Andina*, 67.

⁷⁰ Arguedas, *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, 259.

⁷¹ Investigations that address the relation between orality and literacy and the impact the arrival of literacy has produced in oral-based cultures come from different disciplines and perspectives. This process of creation of theories has generated a debate between two apparently opposed approaches. One of these approaches is called “Great Divide Theories” and the other “New Literacy Studies.” In general terms, the Great Divide Theories establish a more defined difference between oral cultures and literate cultures. This approach considers that oral cultures are more auditive, rhythmic, collective, spontaneous, contextualized, and all senses are integrated; in contrast, literate cultures are more visual, objective, abstract, individualistic, ordered, and de-contextualized. The Great Divide Theories attribute these differences to the fact that the gradual acquisition of literacy produces a sensorial/cognitive change in world’s perception. Eric Havelock, Walter Ong, and Jack Goody belong to this tradition. See Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

the dominant means of communication during Colonial times, which caused it to typically be associated with the cultural elite and as noted by Martin Lienhard, even today, referring to orality also denotes the culture of "the people."⁷² Arguedas, when embedding his writing within orality, achieves not only the transmission of official history, but also translates a heterogeneous multiplicity. As noted by Aymara de Llano, Arguedas' extensive descriptions of nature attempt to translate imaginatively the Quechua way of seeing the world into a Western mode of knowledge.⁷³

To generate an "aural" effect in his writing and to make it closer to orality, Arguedas draws on music. The presence of music in Arguedas' writing is evident. Thus, William Rowe notes that "the sound becomes the very material of the utopian thrust of Arguedas' texts"⁷⁴ and in all Arguedas' work, music provides a model of knowledge that does not separate subject from object, thereby constituting an alternative to Western rationalism as a means for transmitting true knowledge that stimulates not only the eye but the ear.⁷⁵

Music and its relationship to nature are then important elements in the Andean cosmovision. Proud possessor of this knowledge, Arguedas wrote his poem "Llamado a algunos doctores" (Appeal to certain intellectuals) after a group of intellectuals criticized his novel *Todas las Sangres*.⁷⁶ As a response to this humiliation, he wrote the poem, which, as pointed out by Rowe, "mocks, from the position of traditional Andean knowledge, a scientific ideology that is

⁷² Martín Lienhard, *Cultura Popular Andina y Forma Novelesca; Zorros y Danzantes en la Última Novela de Arguedas* (Lima: Tarea, 1981), 70.

⁷³ Aymará de Llano, "La lucha por re-conquistar la letra. El lenguaje en la escritura de José María Arguedas," *Lhymen* IV, 3 (mayo 2005): 29-42.

⁷⁴ "El sonido viene a ser la material misma del empuje utópico de los textos de Arguedas." William Rowe, *Ensayos Arguedianos* (Lima: Sur, 1996), 67.

⁷⁵ William Rowe, *Ensayos Arguedianos*, 118.

⁷⁶ See translation of "Llamado a algunos doctores" (Appeal to certain intellectuals) in Appendix C.

incapable of recognizing Andean wisdom.”⁷⁷ Rowe has also affirmed that of all Arguedas’ work, the novel *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* is “undoubtedly the one that most fully develops the concept of music as a mode of knowledge” subverting the categories of Western knowledge.⁷⁸ But music was not only part of his writing but also the inspiration for it. In a letter dated December 19, 1968, he writes to his psychoanalyst:

Last night, traveling from Lima here, I came repeating an untranslatable Quechua song that made me remember my very dear friend Racila. I’ve created two more verses because we could only remember one, whose content I’ll explain to you in Santiago. I always have written while all my spirit swam in the light of these Quechua songs! I believe I’ve found the song for the *Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*. That type of music heats up memory and melts [it] like nothing else in one torrent of lives.⁷⁹

Therefore, music – especially Andean music – was an essential component of his creative writing process. This excerpt shows how a single Quechua song has the power to connect him with essential memories that allow him the writing flows as a stream.

His appreciation of music caused him to also become an enthusiastic promoter of Andean music. He was excited to share with his friend José Ortiz his experience promoting Andean music, one of his passions:

It’s very probably that I’ll be in charge of a cycle of talks on National Radio! These talks will have this title: ‘Songs and Festivities in Andean Peru.’ We’ll make an imaginary voyage for radio listeners through the different landscapes of the Andes and we’ll have

⁷⁷ William Rowe, “Arguedas Music, Awareness, and Social Transformation,” in *Reconsiderations for Latin American Studies*, ed. Ciro Sandoval and Sandra M. Boschetto (Ohio: Ohio University Center for Latin American Studies, 1998), 35-50, quote in page 36.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁷⁹ “Anoche, en viaje de Lima acá vine repitiendo una intraducible canción quechua que me hizo recordar mi queridísima amiga Racila. Le he creado dos estrofas más, porque sólo nos acordamos de una cuyo contenido le explicaré en Santiago. Yo siempre he escrito algo mientras todo mi espíritu nadaba en la luz de estas canciones quechuas! Creo haber encontrado la del Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo. Ese tipo de música caldea la memoria y funde como ninguna otra cosa en un solo torrente de vidas.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú, to Lola Hoffman, Santiago, Chile, Dic. 19, 1968, in John Murra and Mercedes López Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 185-186.

them listen to the purest voice of the people who live in those landscapes; and that voice will also be the most profound expression of the land itself; the Peru of the Andes.⁸⁰

Saying that “that voice will also be the most profound expression of the land itself,” he is creating a synesthetic communication in which sound is connected to the materiality of the land itself.

Arguedas’ efforts as a promoter of Andean music went beyond the dissemination of this music through radio. He directly supported Andean musicians and recorded their songs.⁸¹ Given his childhood among Andean people, his sensitivity towards their music and song became profound. When Arguedas was teaching in Sicuani, he wrote a letter to José Ortiz in 1939: “The sierra amazed me when I came back. I became very sensitive. I couldn’t listen to *wayno* in the street without becoming extremely emotional; I followed the young gang members – here coming out to sing in the streets during the festivals – absolutely holding back tears.”⁸² We can see that his connectedness to Andean music was immensely strong. Though it was not only Andean music that moved him and inspired his writing, classic music as well, as he said to his friend Moreno Jimeno, with whom he learned to appreciate Bach’s music:

We, Enmanuel, can’t stop caring for one another; at best we’ll come to [feel] deep resentment, and very deep, and then wake up more strongly united. As humble as my own soul, cleaner than I, you Enmanuel taught me the most complex things in the city:

⁸⁰“¡Es muy probable que me haga cargo de un ciclo de charlas en Radio Nacional! Las charlas tendrían este título: “Cantos y Fiestas del Perú Andino.” Haremos viajar a los radio-escuchas por los diferentes paisajes del Ande y les haremos escuchar la voz más pura del pueblo que vive en esos paisajes; y esa voz será también la expresión más profunda de la misma tierra, del Perú del Ande.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to José Ortiz Reyes, Lima, Perú, Jan. 6, 1938, in Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas, Recuerdos de una Amistad* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1996), 59.

⁸¹ Olga Zevallos, oral interview by author, Lima, Perú, June 4, 2010.

⁸² “La sierra me deslumbró a mi vuelta. Me volví muy sensible. No podía oír un *wayno* en la calle sin emocionarme hasta el extremo; seguía a los pandilleros –aquí salen a cantar en las calles en las fiestas– conteniendo materialmente las lágrimas.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to José Ortiz Reyes, Sicuani, Perú, Oct. 9, 1939, in Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 70

about Bach, for example. Listening to a piece of Bach in your room at Sebastián Barranca I found the true face of Antero in “Deep Rivers.” Do you remember?⁸³

Antero is one of the main characters in *Deep Rivers*, the owner of the *zumbayllu*, a spinning top that had magic qualities in the children’s eyes. The name *zumbayllu*, explained by Arguedas in the novel, is an onomatopoeic word that describes this toy and that synthesizes the movement of light and sound in one word.⁸⁴

The writer had internalized music all his life to the point that he not only uses it in his work but also naturally incorporated it in an academic conference in Mexico, as he tells in a letter to his friend John Murra:

When students of anthropology in Mexico were there, they made me give a lecture on indigenism. It went bad in the part I thought I’d present more lucidly. And the improbable happened! Because I said during the talk that I’d learned to sing as an Indian when I was a child, a Mexican asked me to sing at the end of the talk. And I did it! From that solemn stage I sang “Harvest of Peas.” The song was heard with unfathomable and unexpected fervor. Finally, the room erupted in applause. What I couldn’t explain well in words, a little like Guaman Poma, I told with the less precise but more enlightened language of art.⁸⁵

It is particularly interesting that Arguedas compares himself with Guaman Poma de Ayala, a Quechua chronicler of the sixteenth century. His main work, *The First New Chronicle and Good*

⁸³ “Nosotros, Enmanuel, no podemos dejar de querernos; a lo más llegaremos al resentimiento hondo y muy hondo para amanecer más fuertemente unidos. Humilde como mi propia alma, más limpio que yo, tú Enmanuel me enseñaste las cosas más complejas de la ciudad: a Bach, por ejemplo. Oyendo una pieza de Bach en tu cuarto de Sebastián Barranca encontré el verdadero rostro de Antero de “Los ríos profundos”. ¿Te acuerdas?” José María Arguedas, to Manuel Moreno Jimeno, Jun. 18, 1966, in Roland Forgues, ed., *José María Arguedas: La Letra Inmortal: Correspondencia con Manuel Moreno Jimeno* (Lima: Ediciones de los Ríos Profundos, 1993), 151.

⁸⁴ José María Arguedas, *Deep Rivers* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), See chapter six: “Zumbayllu.”

⁸⁵ “Cuando estuvieron los estudiantes de antropología en México me hicieron dar una conferencia sobre indigenismo. Estuvo mala en la parte que pensé que expondría más lúcidamente. ¡Y ocurrió lo inverosímil! Como yo dijera en el curso de la charla, que había aprendido a cantar como indio cuando era niño, un mexicano me pidió que cantara, al final de la charla. ¡Y lo hice! Desde ese solemnisimo estrado canté la cosecha de alberjas. Fue escuchada la canción con indescifrable y sorpresivo fervor. Y al final la sala estalló en aplausos. Lo que no pude explicar bien con palabras, un poco a lo Guaman Poma, lo dije con el lenguaje menos preciso pero más iluminado del arte.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to John Murra, Nov. 3, 1967, in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, ed., 161-162.

Government, was written to call attention to the main problems the Viceroyalty of Peru were confronting during those times. Being a Quechua speaker, the writing style of Guaman Poma was also embedded in orality and was a mixture of old Spanish and Quechua.⁸⁶ The addressee of this letter, John Murra (along with Rolena Adorno), was in charge of the first critical transcription of *The Chronicle and Good Government* in 1980.⁸⁷

Growing up surrounded by nature, Arguedas stimulated his senses in a synesthetic way. The visual and the aural were connected in his experience with nature. It is common to find the presence of nature in his letters. For example, in a letter he wrote from Cuzco to his friend Moreno Jimeno, he says:

This is the most beautiful land in these valleys; *molles*, *pisonayes*, the *pisonay* is an immense tree, which at this time of the year will blossom with marvelous red flowers; the whole base of the tree is carpeted in red; I was four years old when I left there but I remember it perfectly.⁸⁸

Here Arguedas is describing his hometown of Andahuaylas. Luis Jaime Cisneros asserts that landscapes appear in Arguedas' letters to Moreno Jimeno as a means of stimulating the body and soul; it is also a vehicle of friendship and understanding.⁸⁹ Coming from an oral Andean culture and having a close relationship to nature, his description of the Andean region is powerful and constantly appears in numerous letters. In one he encourages his friend to live in the sierra:

⁸⁶ Guamán Poma de Ayala, Felipe, fl. 1613 *The First New chronicle and Good Government: on the history of the world and the Incas up to 1615 / Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala*; trans. and ed. Roland Hamilton (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

⁸⁷ Guamán Poma de Ayala, Felipe, fl. 1613. *El primer Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno*, ed. John V. Murra, Rolena Adorno and Jorge L. Urioste (México: Siglo XXI, 1980).

⁸⁸ "Es la tierra más linda de estos valles; molles, pisonayes, el pisonay es un árbol inmenso, que en este tiempo se carga de unas flores rojas estupendas; todo el pie del árbol se alfombra del rojo; yo tenía cuatro años cuando salí de allí pero me acuerdo perfectamente." José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú, to Manuel Moreno Jimeno, Lima, Perú, Sep. 25, 1939, in Forgues, *José María Arguedas: La Letra Inmortal*, 64.

⁸⁹ Luis Jaime Cisneros, "Arguedas: A propósito de unas Cartas," *Boletín de la Academia Peruana de la Lengua* 25 (1995): 117-131.

“And the mountains will do you a good that you can’t imagine. Live here brother. Live here forever. This is purer as landscape and as people.”⁹⁰ Even though his best friend could not live with him there, Arguedas nonetheless took pleasure in describing the place to him, and perhaps in this way conveyed to him the magic of nature:

To you who likes to get up early: all the birds of this land sing in the eucalyptus that surrounds our house; you’ll open the window and will talk with them; you’ll see how the sun reaches these eucalyptus. Those days we can be the happiest men in the world. Here there are incredibly splendid ... true wonders, they’ll make the most beautiful and most human poems in your very tender soul. Sometimes, in the afternoons, how much I think about how your spirit will blend into the beauty of this land!⁹¹

Nature empowers him. Merged with nature, he (his friend) would be able to speak with the birds blending his spirit with Nature’s spirit. Both being poets, Arguedas was certain that the experience would be a source of poetic inspiration for his friend.

Nature also helped him to express affection, as when he writes to his sister-in-law, Alicia Bustamante:

But last night I left at twelve, we were at the evening rehearsal. How I remembered you! The moon sparkled on the water of the river, along the whole length of the river; the bridge is very long, more than a hundred meters, and I stayed there a while. Almost all the trees that skirt the river were perfectly made out, they’re large eucalyptus. This is one of those unique panoramas of Peru. The landscape had great sweetness at the same time as a deep power. No one has painted that nor could it be done. (...) How I remember you! I almost felt in communion with you; with dear Rata and you, who are my life.⁹²

⁹⁰ “Y la Sierra te hará un bien que no sospechas. Vivir aquí hermano. Vivir aquí siempre. Esto es más puro como paisaje y como gente.” José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú, to Manuel Moreno Jimeno, Lima, Perú, Jan, 7, 1940, in Forgues, *José María Arguedas: La Letra Inmortal*, 67.

⁹¹ “A ti que te gusta levantarte temprano: en los eucaliptos que rodean nuestra casa cantan todas las aves de esta tierra; abrirás la ventana y hablarás con ellas; verás cómo llega el sol a estos eucaliptos. Podemos ser esos días los hombres más felices del mundo. Hay aquí hermosísimas...verdaderas maravillas, en tu alma tiernísima ellas harán el más bello y el más humano poema. A veces, en las tardes ¡cómo pienso en que tu espíritu se confundirá con la hermosura de esta tierra!” José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú, to Manuel Moreno Jimeno, Lima, Perú, Apr. 9, 1939, in Forgues, ed. *José María Arguedas: La Letra Inmortal*, 58.

⁹² “Pero anoche me fui a las doce, estuvimos en un ensayo de la velada. ¡Cómo me acordé de ustedes! Sobre el agua del río brillaba la luna, a todo lo largo del río; el puente es muy largo, más de cien metros, y me quedé un rato allí. Casi todos los árboles que orillan el río se distinguían perfectamente, son eucaliptos grandes. Este es uno de esos panoramas únicos del Perú. El paisaje tenía una gran dulzura al mismo tiempo que una profunda fuerza. Nadie ha pintado eso ni lo podrá hacer.” José María Arguedas, Sicuani, Perú, to Alicia Bustamante, Lima, Perú, 1939, in

Standing facing the beauty of nature, he remembers his loved ones and wanted them to be there to share the spectacle. He describes in detail the landscape and projects onto himself qualities that are led by his emotions: “The landscape had great sweetness at the same time as a deep strength.” The use of the word “communion” here emphasizes this integration between nature, those he loved, and himself. Here, we can invoke again to Burke’s concept of consubstantiation, which implies that we can be substantially one with the other.⁹³

In the mid-1950s Arguedas had a romance with Vilma Ponce while he was doing research in Mantaro Valley and writing his novel *Deep Rivers*. This romance was significant for him not only because of the personal affection it implied, but also because of the natural environment in which the romance was set, the small Andean town of Apata. Again, Arguedas blended his feelings towards nature with his personal feelings. In a letter he wrote to his lover Vilma Ponce, Arguedas tells of his affection for the place, the people and nature:

Nothing seems to me equal to you in Lima, nothing seems to me more beautiful than your company and Apata! It will be because you’ve been born and raised in such a beautiful place that your heart is noble and generous. In my hours of discouragement I remember you and remember the forests of alder and eucalyptus, the two rivers that surround the Apata valley; our walk in Paucar, in Santa María, in Iscos, the tree-lined streets, that small hill from where “Perdón Pampa ” is seen like a true paradise; and I remember you, the kisses I gave you on that little peak and I understand that I’m happy and that I’ll be even more so, and that the price I pay for you and for having known your wonderful Apata is actually well deserved.⁹⁴

Carmen María Pinilla, ed. *Apuntes Inéditos: Celia y Alicia en la Vida de José María Arguedas* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2007) 94.

⁹³ Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 21.

⁹⁴ “Nada me parece igual a ti en Lima, nada me parece más hermoso que tu compañía y ¡Apata! Será porque has nacido y te has criado en un lugar tan bello que tu corazón es noble y generoso. En mis horas de desaliento te recuerdo y recuerdo los bosques de alisos y eucaliptos, los dos ríos que circundan el valle de Apata; nuestro paseo por Paucar, por Santa María, por Iscos, las alamedas, esa pequeña cumbre desde donde se ve “Perdón Pampa” como un verdadero paraíso; y te recuerdo a ti, los besos que te di en esa pequeña cumbre y comprendo que soy feliz y que lo seré aún mucho más, y que el precio que pago por ti y por haber conocido tu maravilloso Apata es en realidad bien merecido.” José María Arguedas, Lima Perú, to Vilma Ponce Martinez, Huancayo, Perú, Apr. 2, 1955, in

Arguedas attributes the generosity of a person, in this case his lover, to her closeness to the beauty of nature. Being in Lima, far away from Vilma, he missed not only her but the landscape of Apata and the places they used to meet, all forming a symbiosis between the woman, the town and the landscape:

Mama, in my name tell them that I'll return to the tree-lines streets of Apata, to the trees on the plaza, the river, the town of Izcós, to all the countryside where I was happy; tell them that I'll return, that I need them, again, to strengthen my body and my soul; tell the same to our little attic, and to all, to your own heart.⁹⁵

Arguedas had a deep respect for all things, alive and inanimate, and treated them as equals. When he traveled outside the country, he was frequently amazed by the landscape. In a letter he wrote to Lola Hoffmann, his psychoanalyst from Germany, he writes:

Yesterday I sailed on the Rhine. I would have wanted to do it on my knees. It was a god, a great god. All that civilization has done to mask his divinity hasn't achieved anything except to extol his air, his mythic profundity. It's a god like Apurímac or Wilcamayo.⁹⁶

What he says in this letter conveys a religious sensibility toward the river; he wishes he could worship it like a God and compares the Rhine to the "divinity" of Peruvian rivers like the Apurímac, a main protagonist in his novel *Deep River*.

Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en el Valle del Mantaro* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2004), 149.

⁹⁵ "Mamita, a mi nombre díles que volveré a las alamedas de Apata, a los árboles de la plaza, al río, al pueblo de Izcós, a todos los campos donde fui feliz; díles que volveré, que necesito de ellos, nuevamente, para fortalecer mi cuerpo y mi alma; dile lo mismo a nuestro pequeño altílo, y a todos, a tu propio corazón". José María Arguedas, Lima Perú, to Vilma Ponce Martínez, Huancayo, Perú, Jun. 6, 1956, in Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en el Valle del Mantaro*, 183.

⁹⁶ "Ayer navegué sobre el Rhin. Hubiera deseado hacerlo de rodillas. Era un dios, un dios grande. Todo lo que la civilización ha hecho por encubrir su divinidad no ha logrado sino exaltar su aire, su profundidad mítica. Es un dios como el Apurímac o el Wilcamayo." José María Arguedas, Germany, to Lola Hoffmann, Santiago, Chile, (Sept. 1962?), in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt ed., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 90.

Also, when he was in New York, he could not find a better way to manifest his admiration than to compare it to the overpowering nature of the Amazon River:

How immeasurable is the human being! I feel so happy in New York like on Christmas Day in an Andean village. I have the impression of being in a universe that doesn't appear to be made by man. It's as powerful as the Amazon.⁹⁷

In a letter he wrote to Murra in 1965, he shows again his sensitivity towards nature even in the center of a large city like Washington, DC. He writes:

Washington gave me the impression of being the capital of an empire, a city that keeps growing as one gazes at it; all of it made from silence, masses of buildings and spaces. A unique city that I didn't understand on my first visit. (...). Do you remember the squirrels that play in the big parks of Washington? In a way, they're better than the obelisk and the Capitol.⁹⁸

For Arguedas, the obelisk and the Capitol represent human power and civilization, while the squirrels are the remnants of the natural world and its purity in the midst of the city. How harmless and refreshing squirrels seemed to him in contrast to the great buildings of that city, which bore the burden of a complex human history.

His connection and identification with nature and music constitutes another way to construct himself as a communication bridge. His appreciation of sensory experience makes him to invite rhetorically to his addressees to experience sensory stimulation and through it to acquire knowledge. For example, in a letter to his young friend and disciple, Ortiz Rescaniere, he

⁹⁷ “¡Qué inconmensurable es el ser humano! Me siento en Nueva York tan feliz como en día de Navidad en una aldea andina. Tengo la impresión de estar en un universo que no parece hecho por el hombre. Es tan poderoso como el Amazonas.” José María Arguedas, New York, United States, to Lola Hoffmann, Santiago, Chile, (Apr.6, 1962?), in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt ed., *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 119.

⁹⁸ Washington me dio la impresión de la capital de un imperio, ciudad que va creciendo a medida que se la contempla; toda ella hecha de silencio, de masas de edificios y de espacios. Ciudad única a la que no entendí de primera vista. (...) ¿Recuerdas a las ardillas que juegan en los grandes parques de Whashington? En cierta forma son mejores que el obelisco y el capitolio.” José María Arguedas, New York, United States to John Murra, Apr., 6, 1965, in John Murra and Mercedes López-Baralt, *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 121.

encouraged him to subject himself directly to the overpowering nature of the port of Chimbote: “Chimbote, the most appalling and powerful universe at the same time! You’ll be incredible happy when you know it.”⁹⁹ In the same letter he also said that nothing can replace the experience of being close to the people:

You have to come now to nurture yourself from the people’s flesh; passing through hard times that perhaps your own skin would resist enduring it. Nothing can offer what people give when you are with them, body by body, breath by breath.¹⁰⁰

This reflects what Carmen Pinilla has investigated in her book *Arguedas, Knowledge and Life*, where she defends the thesis that the writer valued knowledge acquired through direct life experience in place of pure rational scientific knowledge. Carmen Pinilla considers that Arguedas, after reading Wilhem Dilthey, found the theoretical support for his intuitions. Dilthey, an experienced sociologist, was one of the authors Arguedas read in the Institute of Ethnology, where he studied Anthropology. Carmen Pinilla says: “It happens that our writer found in Dilthey the foundation for all his points of view about the correspondence between him and his people, between his experiences and those of his social world.”¹⁰¹ In fact, Dilthey proposes that we exist only in relation with the world and that the idea of the world is not only intellectual but attached to the experience of life.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ “¡Chimbote, el universo más espantoso y fuerte al mismo tiempo! Serás bárbaramente feliz cuando lo conozcas.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, Paris, France, Aug. 27, 1968, in Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 268.

¹⁰⁰ “Tienes que venir a nutrirte ahora de la carne del pueblo, pasando por pellejerías que a lo mejor tu pellejo se ha de resistir a aguantar. Nada puede ofrecer lo que el pueblo da cuando se está con él, cuerpo a cuerpo, aliento a aliento.” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Alejandro Ortiz Rescaniere, Paris, France, Aug. 27, 1968, in Ortiz Rescaniere, ed., *José María Arguedas Recuerdos de una Amistad*, 269.

¹⁰¹ “Sucede que nuestro escritor encontró en Dilthey la fundamentación de todos sus puntos de vista acerca de la correspondencia entre él y su pueblo, entre sus vivencias y las de su mundo social.” Carmen Maria Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas Conocimiento y Vida* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Pontificia Universidad Católica, 1994), 94.

¹⁰² Wilhelm Dilthey, *Teoria de las Concepciones del Mundo*, tr. Julián Marías (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1974).

Arguedas was above all a writer of experience and affections. Pedro Lastra shared with me an anecdote that describes well the fascination Arguedas had for nature; and according to Lastra, this was also linked to the poetic sensitivity of the writer:

I always felt that Arguedas' writing was the writing of a poet, all that lyrical intentionality that runs through it, even when narrating situations of great violence there's a poetic élan that allows it to precisely produce all these transfigurations. What happens through the language that he creates is a poetic discovery of the broadest dimension. And this is explained not only through his Andean cosmovision, though that is a foundation, but there is a transfigurative experience. I witnessed a pair of experiences such as he lived in nature: we were walking near a stream, on the path down there was a willow. We were talking about other things. You see a beautiful tree and then you keep going ... don't you? But he stopped and said to me: "this tree is a God," incredible, I looked at him and his face was transfigured. Another day we were in Chosica and we were walking amongst the trees and all of a sudden a bird sang, the bird sang beautifully and I looked at him (at Arguedas) because there was a real transfiguration and one felt oneself affected by this and we began to listen to the bird and he said to me: "how strange because that bird is abundant in other regions." His vision of the world is transformational, transfigurative because for him things are alive.¹⁰³

Lastra considers that the transfiguring capacity that nature had over Arguedas went beyond the Andean cosmovision that he incorporated into his world view and was, in fact, closer to his inherent poetic spirit. Probably both sources truly coincided in this one man.

This may be confirmed by Arguedas himself. In *Apuntes Inéditos* there is a bio-chronology Arguedas made and sent to Angel Flores, head of the Spanish version of the journal *Americas* of the OAS. In it Arguedas reveals a peculiar form of learning in which a sensory connection with nature plays a leading role. He says:

I'm sure no creature formed, as I am, in the indigenous Andes, has managed to penetrate those spiritual universes as substantially as I have, and none of those creatures who've gone down to the city and assimilated to it, newcomers and practitioners of professions and arts of the city, has preserved the essence of the Peruvian indigenous like I have (indigenous in

¹⁰³ Pedro Lastra (Chilean poet), oral interview by author, Lima, Perú, April 24, 2014.

the sense of Indian, of Indian as a culture that despite the many changes has remained distinct from what is Western).¹⁰⁴

We can see that Arguedas was aware of his uniqueness and built himself as a cultural bridge and a vehicle for a change in Peruvian society. He built this bridge using different strategies: affection, orality, and direct connection with nature and people. Using the concept of “invitational rhetoric” developed by Sonja Foss and Cindy Griffin¹⁰⁵, we could say that the writer is inviting Peruvians to follow his path and constantly fashion ourselves as cultural bridges in a society dominated by diversity, change and contradictions. Closing the gap between the writer and the persona, his suicide was a natural ending in the middle of the chaotic future represented by Chimbote. However, he transformed his suicide into a turning point for Peruvian history; during his life he served as that unique cultural bridge, yet after him, any one of us could be bridge that chasm if we choose to follow his lead towards a better understanding of one another and the complex world around us.

¹⁰⁴ “Estoy seguro [de] que ninguna criatura formada, como yo, en los Andes indígenas ha logrado penetrar en esos universos espirituales tan sustancialmente como yo; y ninguna de esas criaturas bajadas a la ciudad y asimiladas a ella, iniciadas y practicantes de profesiones y artes propias de la ciudad, ha conservado como yo la esencia de lo indígena peruano (indígena en el sentido de indio, de lo indio como cultura que a pesar de los muchos cambios ha permanecido distinta de lo occidental).” José María Arguedas, Lima, Perú to Angel Flores, Nov. 23, 1955, in Pinilla, ed., *Apuntes Inéditos*, 168.

¹⁰⁵ “Invitational Rhetoric, developed by Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin in 1995 is an alternative to the traditional conception of rhetoric as persuasion. Invitational rhetoric is defined as an invitation to understanding as a means to create a relationship rooted in equality, immanent value and self-determination. It constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetorician's world and to see it as the rhetorician does. It is a form of communication designed to generate understanding among individuals with different perspectives.” Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss., *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009), 569.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this dissertation we have seen that Arguedas was aware of his uniqueness and built himself as a cultural bridge and a vehicle for a change in Peruvian society. His letters were a mirror in which he observed himself, and where now we can observe him. With his life, as much as with his written work, he proposed a new logic for grasping the nature of Peruvian society. Constructing himself as an intercultural bridge in Peruvian society, he invited Peruvians to imagine a society that could overcome differences.

We have analyzed how Arguedas fashioned himself in his letters. Arguedas' self-portrayal in his letters could be interpreted, to some extent, as an artificial construction, where he emphasized the traits by which he wanted other people to remember him.

Arguedas' lived insertion in the chasm between two cultures allowed him to begin to build unprecedented lines of communication in Peru, constituting himself as a living bridge. By so constructing his persona, he reveals his communication strategy of presenting himself as a pliable verbal platform between cultures of the Peruvian Andes and the Westernized coast. Nowadays this exceptional bridging capacity is better understood than ever before because he foretold what was going to happen in the future.

In the process of growing up and developing as a professional between two cultures, he created not only a new identity but also a new rationality. His letters are in fact sites of rhetorical

invention, where Arguedas produces a unique rhetoric to portray himself as a structural, cultural, and inter-personal mediator.

Even though he could not resolve his own internal psychological conflict, generated by his traumatic childhood experiences and his position of marginality in Peruvian society, he constructed himself as a metaphor of the Nation—a nation with contradictions and ambiguities—allowing the dominant groups to learn about Andean culture by learning about him through his writings.

Not being himself indigenous, Arguedas represented indigenous people by situating himself in the place of the “other.” The fact that he grew up among indigenous people allowed him to change the concept of “mestizaje,” so that it would be hence understood not as racial mixture but as a cultural mixture, one elective and not determined. He viewed himself as a representation of the cultural mixture in Peruvian society.

He felt more comfortable communicating in Quechua. It was not only his status as bilingual person that gave Arguedas the capacity to connect easily with Andean culture but his early experience surrounded by this oral culture, which was a determinant in the formation of his cognition, personality, and interests.

He was convinced of his mission in life: to vindicate Andean culture, to preserve its identity and to make it noticeable for the rest of the country. But he did not want to preserve a static Andean culture, which would be impossible. He was aware of the influence of Western culture and the changes it was producing over Andean culture. In fact, during his anthropological studies in Mantaro Valley, he noticed that even though this area had an important Spaniard

influence, the traditional culture of this region incorporated foreign influence and transformed it without losing his own identity, creating a syncretic culture.¹

It is difficult to say whether Arguedas conceived his suicide as an integral part of his last novel, or whether it was a natural combination of his creative process and his mental illness. But we may understand Arguedas' suicide as a mythic symbol of the beginning of a new era in Peruvian history, and that he transformed his biography into a metaphor of Peru.

Childhood memories are among the most prominent recurrent topics in Arguedas' letters. He portrays his childhood with ambiguity between happiness and suffering, and as embedded in a particular Andean cultural context. His memories of childhood expressed not only his connection with Andean culture, but also his traumatic experiences during that period. This ambivalence in Arguedas' early memories is recurrent in his letters, and it reflects the ambiguities and contradictions of his country, Peru.

Despite his feeling of orphanhood, Arguedas kept, way into his adulthood, very positive memories of the local Andean culture that had nurtured him, and where he had imbibed a different type of learning, one that allowed him to detect the subtleties of nature.

Arguedas' memories of childhood in his letters portray ambivalent feelings of suffering and tenderness, with an emphasis on the need for protection, identification with the Andean world vision, and the creation of a new sense of "otherness," one more closely related to emotions than to culture per se. As Arguedas self-constructs his past, he can deploy the resulting alterity from his early traumas and palliative experiences with indigenous people to fashion himself in a pivotal role of Peruvian cultural bridging.

¹ See Carmen María Pinilla, ed., *Arguedas en el Valle del Mantaro* (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la PUCP, 2004).

Due to his shared experiences with indigenous people, Arguedas was able to differentiate his project from other types of *indigenismo*, ones that were external to Andean culture. He felt his mission was to speak of Andean Peru and its people, as he had seen and known them personally, and not – as other writers who did not know indigenous culture directly – had represented it.

A messianic attitude can be noted in the way Arguedas writes. He believed he had the knowledge and therefore the responsibility to convey to Peruvian society at large the reality of its indigenous people from inside, not artificially as an outsider. He had a more intimate relation with indigenous people and wanted to pour this intimacy into his literature, developing what Estelle Tarica names “the intimate *indigenismo*.”

Arguedas explicitly states that Peru – with all its raw intensity, its beauty, and its fierce contradictions – throbs within him. And it is the inner conviction of his capacity to incorporate this embodied experience of Peru into the “living word” that helps him in his creative process.

One of Arguedas’s main goals was to preserve Quechua culture, a goal that made him – as a Quechua speaker – central to the project of cultural integration through the building of new communication bridges. Thus, translating the myths of Huarochirí, Arguedas had the opportunity to recount a millenary oral tradition to modern Peruvian social reality. The myths of Huarochiri later found expression in Arguedas’ last novel, *The Fox from Up Above and The Fox from Down Below*.

Important literary figures and ideological influences are featured in the letters, such as the Peruvian poet César Vallejo and the political thinker José Carlos Mariátegui – both of whom shared a deep concern for understanding Peru. Among the influences of foreign writers who

appear in his letters is Walt Whitman, whose poetry also reflects a sense of identification with his own country, the United States.

Arguedas suggests that, similar to Vallejo, his writing would provoke another profound transformation in Peruvian consciousness and, to some extent, it did. Today, he is considered a cultural hero; in contrast to other Peruvian writers, common people – especially from the Andean region – feel a strong identification with him.

Following the tradition of other national bards, Arguedas sets into motion an organic approach to reality, integrating nature and society in one unity. Much as Walt Whitman, he inherited the tradition of romantic writers who embodied the nation recovering its popular culture, rescuing its myths and folklore. Arguedas portrays his embodiment of the nation by keeping the history of his country alive within himself.

Professionally, he preferred to fashion himself proudly as a creative writer. He believes that his fictional work was nourished by reality but always using Andean mythology as his guiding motif. Being an anthropologist, he was always attentive to oral narratives while traveling in the Andean regions.

Arguedas expressed in his letters his passion for literary work and how proud he felt of literature's capacity to foretell reality. He also had a true vocation as a teacher, a vocation evident not only when he was a high school teacher in Sicuani, Cuzco, but in his very writing.

The emphasis he placed in denying that he is an “intellectual” is notable. However, this self-portrayal as “ignorant” contrasts with the quantity of books that Arguedas confidently mentions in his letters, emphasizing the fact that he is planning to use some of them in his classes with his students.

He constitutes the *hybrid intellectual*, who according to Lambright is the one who “begins the task of unraveling dominant discourse on the nation and proposing alternative ways of understanding, and being in, Peru”². For him, literary writing should not be simply fiction but a possible avenue for understanding the pain and miseries of human beings. It is more important for him to give testimony, through literature, of the unjust conditions under which suffering people live.

Arguedas also learned and expressed a certain rationale, not only through the handling of print but through of his skilled orchestration of all the senses, especially the sense of hearing, which allows closer integration with the outside world.

He portrays his authorial self as a writer who is looking for a new writing style to better describe different realities, their collisions and encounters. He is thus urged to transform Spanish into a verbal medium that can better represent the Andean Indian.

Fiction and reality go hand by hand in his literary work, which could be considered, overall, as a powerful testimonial. He found in testimonial writing the possibility to portray the evolution of Peruvian society in an all-inclusive manner, such as no other Peruvian writer had ever done before.

Arguedas imposed a mission upon himself: to allow Peruvians, especially those who lived in Lima and the coastal cities, a better understanding of the social, political and cultural realities of the Peru (*el Perú profundo*) of his times. He believed that it would be mainly through his literary work that Peruvians, and non-Peruvians alike, would have the opportunity to gain a closer understanding of their society.

² Anne Lambright, *Creating the Hybrid Intellectual: Subject, Space, and the Feminine in the Narrative of José María Arguedas* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 10.

It is important to emphasize that Arguedas' letters also show his openness to political views, as evidenced in his comments about the United States in some of his letters. It is only in the letters to Hugo Blanco that Arguedas expressed a more explicit revolutionary attitude, but this seems to be an exception produced by the political influence of the moment and the influence of his second wife, Sybila Arredondo. Arguedas was first and foremost an artistic soul with social sensitivity, interested in improving the quality life of Andean people.

He was also concerned that Peruvian society as a whole did not yet acknowledge Andean culture as the core of Peruvian culture. Arguedas was more of a cultural militant than a political militant. He foresaw that the social transformation in Peru was going to come through Andean cultural resistance more than through a political revolution.

Arguedas limits his literary work to being a testimony and an exhortation to our becoming more vigilant and compassionate about social injustice in Peru. He was not a political leader, but a witness who presented his testimony and used literature to portray Peruvian reality.

He had an intense personality, a fact which is reflected in the way he writes. The language he uses has a dramatic tone, sometimes optimistic, other times hopeless. Even though there are some structural differences in the way he writes to his different addressees— there are differences in uses of multisyllabic words and complex sentence constructions³—; there is a flow of affection in his writing that is common in most of his letters and in the specific topics analyzed in this dissertation there are more similarities than differences in his communication strategies probably due to his cultural poetics and writing practice.

³ See Appendix of his translated letters

In regard to Arguedas' personality, it is noticeable in his letters that he was a very emotive person. He portrayed himself as a writer who leaves rationality aside and who flows with his emotions. His letters invariably reveal his emotional state of mind, the intensity of his language, the affective tone that permeates his writing – in sum, the man behind the text. We could say that Arguedas considers authenticity and affection as the best ways to communicate with his receptors.

In several letters and testimonies Arguedas stresses (highlights / intensifies) his status as an orphan (*wakcha* in Quechua). As pointed out by Mercedes López-Baralt, the writer projected his biographical predicament of having been an orphan onto his marginal condition between the two worlds, Andean and Western, constructing himself as an agonizing and living bridge. He valued a sense of belonging to a community and to the human condition; for him, the purpose of writing should not be separated from the purpose of life – solidarity.

We can use the category Cornejo Polar proposes, the *migrant subject*, to understand Arguedas's approach to other countries. In his letters he relates his impressions when he visited different countries, but probably the country closest to his heart, during his life –after Peru—was Chile. Chile represented a refuge where he could find the mental peace to write, a peace that would not be possible to find in his own country. He found there a kind of “brotherhood” which gave him the support he needed.

In contrast to Chile, the United States was a country that inspired fear, respect, and admiration, but not affection. Immersed in Andean beliefs, Arguedas considered all things as alive; however, he could not find in New York a place to offer his tenderness.

In contrast to American cities such as New York or Washington, Arguedas felt more responsive to Paris, a city which, in his estimation, was in some way musical and had the virtue of bringing the natural world to the people of the city.

For Arguedas, music and nature are what make it possible for a human being to endure the suffering produced by social injustice in Peru. Music and nature were, in particular, his main sources for inspiration which helped him to connect with his creative side, enabling him to produce the sensory and intuitive writing that characterizes his literary work.

The way in which he perceived reality was closely aligned to the Andean cosmovision, which he clearly internalized during his infancy by direct contact with the Andean communities nearest him. Therefore, he did not establish a separation between human beings and the elements of the natural world. On the contrary, one can perceive a profound interaction between both domains in his work. Andean music (which poignantly echoes the voices of nature and the heart) was an essential component in this creative process. Arguedas valued knowledge acquired through experience and not only through purely rational, scientific methods. He preferred to follow his intuitions.

For further studies on Arguedas' letters it would be important to contextualize more in writing letter practices during Peru of mid-twenty century, specially in the Andean region. Because there is not much bibliography on this topic it would be necessary to do oral history about the literary practices in Andean region.

Even though the focus of this dissertation has been on the letters of Arguedas, the oral history obtained from the testimonies of the interviewees could be used in a complementary research on the reception of Arguedas' persona. Each one of the interviewees perceived a different angle of the writer although all of them felt identified with him. This could imply that each person

projected his or her interests and personality over Arguedas or that he had the capacity to be empathetic and to connect with different kind of people.

APPENDIX A

HYMN SONG TO OUR FATHER CREATOR TUPAC AMARU

To Our Father Creator Tupac Amaru

(Hymn-Song) – Jose Maria Arguedas

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: José María Arguedas, *Complete Works, Volume V* (Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1983), 223-233.

Tupac Amaru Kamaq taytanchisman (haylli-taki)

-To Doña Cayetana, my Indian mother, who protected me with her tears and her tenderness when I was an orphan child living in a hostile and alien house. To the communal farmers of the four *ayllus* [communities] of Puquio with whom I felt for the first time, strength and hope-.

Tupac Amaru, son of the Serpent God; made with the snow of Salqantay; your shadow reaches a profound heart like the shadow of the mountain god, without ceasing and without limits.

Your serpent god's eyes that shone like the crystalline lens of all eagles, could see the future, could see far. Here I am, strengthened by your blood, not dead, still shouting.

I am shouting, I am your people; you made anew my soul; my tears you made anew; my wound you ordained that it will not close, that it will hurt even more. Since the day on which you spoke, since the time in which you struggled with the steely and cruel Spaniard, since the moment in which you spit in his face; since when your boiling blood spilled on the boiling earth, in my heart peace and resignation were extinguished. There is nothing but fire, there is nothing but a serpent's hate against the demons, our masters.

*The river is singing,
the calandra lark is crying,
the wind is twisting around;
day and night the straw of the steppe vibrates;
our sacred river is howling;
on the crests of our Wamanis mountains,
in their teeth, the snow drips and shines.
Where are you since they murdered you for us?*

Our father, listen carefully to the voice of our rivers; listen to the fearsome trees of our great jungle; the song possessed, so bleached by the sea, listen to them, my father, Serpent God. We are alive, we are yet! From the movement of the rivers and stones, from the dance of the trees and mountains, from their movement, we drink powerful blood, increasingly strong. We are picking ourselves up, for your house, remembering your name and your death!

*In the villages, with their little heart, children are crying.
In the mountains, without clothes, without hat, without coats, nearly blind, men are crying,
sadder, more sadly than the children.
Under the shade of some tree, the man is still crying, Serpent God, more wounded than in your
time; pursued, like rows of lice.
Listen to my body's vibration! Listen to the coldness of my blood, its frozen trembling.
Listen to the song of the abandoned dove on the lambras tree, never loved;*

*The sweet weeping of the not fast-flowing rivers, of the springs that
Softly flow in the world.
We are still here, we live!*

From your immense wound, from your pain that no one would have being able to close, there rises for us the rage that boiled in your veins. We have to lift ourselves now, father, our brother, my Serpent God. Now we have no fear of the masters' gunpowder lightning, of the bullets and grapeshot, now we do not fear it so much. We are still here! Crying out your name, like the growing rivers and the fire that devours the ripe straw, like the infinite multitudes of jungle ants, we have to launch ourselves, until our land becomes truly our land and our villages our villages.

*Listen, my father, my Serpent God, listen:
the bullets are killing,
the machine guns are rupturing their veins,
the iron sabers are cutting human flesh;
the horses with their ironworks, with their mad and heavy helmets, my head,
my stomach are splitting,
here and everywhere;
over the frozen back of the hills of Cerro de Pasco,
on the cold plains, in the heated valleys of the coast,
over the great living grasses, between the deserts.*

My dear father, Serpent God, your face was like the great heaven, hear me: now the masters' heart is more appalling, dirtier, inspires more hate. They have corrupted our own brothers, they have turned their hearts inside out and, with them, armed with arms that the very own demon of demons could not have invented or fabricated, they are killing us! And nevertheless, there is a great light in our lives! We are shining! We have come down to the cities of the masters. From there I speak to you.

We have come down like the never-ending rows of ants from the great jungle. Here we are, with you, loved, unforgettable leader, eternal Amaru.

They snatch our lands. Our little sheep feed themselves with the dry leaves swept along by the wind, which even the wind does not want; our only cow agonizingly licks the little salt from the land. Serpent God, our father: in your time we were still free, communal landowners. Now, like a dog that flees from death, we run towards the hot valleys. We have extended ourselves in thousands of alien villages, terrified birds.

Listen, my father: from the remote ravines, from the cold or burning prairies that the counterfeit *wiracochas* [false gods, a reference to the Conquistadores] took from us, we have fled and have extended ourselves to the four corners of the world. There are those who cling to their threatened and small lands. They have stayed up there, on their homeland and, like us, tremble from rage, thinking, contemplating. We do not fear death now. Our lives are colder, they hurt more than death. Listen, Serpent God: the whip, the prison, the unending suffering, death, they have strengthened us, as they did to you, older brother, just like to your body and your spirit. Until where has this new life to push us? The force that death ferments and raises in man, could not make men turn the world upside down, to shake it?

I am in Lima, in the enormous village, head of the false gods. In the Pampa de Comas, on the sand, with my tears, with my strength, with my blood, singing, I built a house. The river of my village, its shadow, its great wood cross, the grasses and bushes that blossom, surrounding it, are, are throbbing inside that house; a golden hummingbird plays in the air, on the roof.

We have arrived at the immense town of the masters and we are stirring it up. With our heart we reach it, we penetrate it; with our rejoicing unextinguished, with sparkling happiness of the suffering man who has the power of the entire heavens, with our old and new hymns, we are surrounding it. We have to wash some of the guilt that for centuries settled in this head corrupted

by false gods, with tears, love and fire. With whatever it takes! We are millions, here, now. We are together; we have congregated village by village, name by name, and we are pushing at this huge city that hated us, that looked down on us like horses' excrement. We have to convert it into a town of men that intone the hymns of the four corners of the world, a happy city, where every man works, a huge town that would not hate and would be clean, like the snow of the mountain gods where the pestilence of evil never comes. Thus it is, therefore it has to be, my father, therefore it has to be, in your name, which falls over life like a cascade of eternal water that leaps and illuminates all the spirit and the path.

*Calmly wait,
calmly hear,
calmly consider this world.
I am raising myself up well!
I chant;
same song I chant.
I learn now the language of Castile,
I understand the wheel and the machine;
with us your name grows;
sons of gods speak to you and
listen to you,
as the master warrior, pure fire
that arouses, illuminating.
Dawn comes.
They tell me that in other villages
whipped men, those who suffered,
are now eagles, condors of
vast and free flight.
Calmly wait.
We will reach further even more than you desired and dreamt.
We will hate more than you have hated;
Love more deeply than you have loved,
With a love of an enchanted dove, of a calandra lark.
Calmly wait, with that hate and with that love without peace and limitless,
what you could not do we will do.
To the frozen lake that sleeps, to the black precipice, to the bluish fly that sees and forecasts the death of the moon, the stars and the earth, the soft and powerful heart of man; to every living and nonliving being that is in this world, in whom blood flows or does not flow, man or dove, stone or sand, we will make them rejoice, that they will have infinite light, Amaru, my Father.*

Holy death will come alone, no longer hurled with braided slings, nor exploded by the lightning of gunpowder. The world will be man, man world, all fit for you.

Come down to earth, Serpent God, fill me with your breath; put your hands on the imperceptible

cloth that covers my heart. Give me your strength, beloved father.

APPENDIX B

THE PONGO'S DREAM

Jose Maria Arguedas. Translated by Susan Ackerman.

From: Orin Starn, Carlos Degregori, and Robin Kirk, ed., *The Peru Reader. History, Culture and Politics*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995), 258-263.

A little man headed to his master's mansion. As one of the serfs on the lord's estate, he had to perform the duty of a pongo, a lowly house servant. He had a small and feeble body, a meek spirit. His clothes were old and tattered. Everything about him was pitiful.

The great lord, owner of the mansion and lands surrounding it, could not help laughing when the little man greeted him in the mansion's corridors.

"What are you? A person or something else?" the lord asked the little man in front of all the other serfs. The pongo bowed his head and did not answer. He stood frightened, eyes frozen. "Let's see!" the lord said. "With those worthless little hands, you must at least know how to scrub pots or use a broom. Take this garbage away!" he ordered.

The pongo knelt to kiss his master's hand and followed him to the kitchen hanging his head.

The little man had a small body but an average man's strength. Whatever he was told to do he did well, but he always wore a slight look of horror on his face. Some of the serfs laughed

at him, while others pitied him. “The most orphaned of all orphans,” a cook of mixed blood once said upon seeing him. “His frozen eyes must be children of the moon wind, his heart must be all sadness.”

The little man rarely talked to anyone. He worked and ate quietly. Whatever they ordered him to do was done obediently. “Yes, *papacito*, *mamacita*,” were the only words he uttered.

Perhaps because of the little man's frightened look and his thread-bare, filthy clothes, or perhaps because of his unwillingness to talk, the lord regarded the pongo with special contempt. He enjoyed humiliating him most at dusk, when all the serfs gathered to say the Hail Mary in the mansion's great hall. He would shake him vehemently in of the serfs like a piece of animal skin. He would push his head force him to kneel, and then, when the little man was on his knees, slap him lightly on the face.

“I believe you are a dog. Bark!” he would tell the pongo.

The little man could not bark.

“Stand on all fours,” the lord would order him next.

The pongo would obey and start crawling on all fours.

“Walk sideways like a dog,” the lord would demand.

The little man had learned to run like the small dogs inhabiting the high moors.

The lord would laugh heartily. His whole body shook with exhilaration.

“Come back here!” he would yell, when the servant reached the end of the great hall.

The pongo would return, running sideways, arriving out of breath.

Meanwhile, some of the other serfs would quietly say their Hail Marys, as if their voices were a wind hidden in their hearts.

“Perk up your ears, hare! You are just an ugly hare!” the lord would command the exhausted little man. “Sit on your two paws. Put your hands together.”

The pongo could sit in the exact same prayerful pose that these animals take when they stand still on the rocks, looking as if he had learned this habit while in his mother's womb. But the one thing he could not do was perk up his ears. Some of the serfs laughed at him.

With his boot, the lord would then knock him to the brick floor.

“Let us say the Our Father,” he would then say to his Indians as they waited in line.

The pongo would get up slowly, but he could not pray because he was not in his place, nor did any place belong to him.

In the darkness, the serfs would leave the great hall for the courtyard and head to their living quarters. “Get out of here, offal!” the master would often order the pongo.

And so, every day, in front of the other serfs, the master would make his new pongo jump to his demands. He would force him to laugh, to fake tears. He would hand him over to the other workers so that they would ridicule him too.

But . . . one afternoon, during the Hail Mary, when the hall was filled with everyone who worked and lived on the lord's estate and the master himself began to stare at the pongo with loathing and contempt, that same little man spoke very clearly. His face remained a bit frightened.

“Great lord, please grant me permission. Dear lord, I wish to speak to you.”

The lord could not believe his ears. “What? Was that you who spoke or someone else?”

“Your permission, dear master, to speak to you. It is you I want to talk to,” the pongo replied.

“Talk... if you can.”

“My father, my lord, my heart,” the little man began. “Last night, I dreamt that the two of us had died. Together, we had died.” “You with me? You? Tell all, Indian,” the master said to him. “Since we were dead men, my lord, the two of us were standing naked before our dear father Saint Francis, both of us, next to each other.”

“And then? Talk!” ordered the master, partly out of anger and partly anxious with curiosity.

“When he saw us dead, naked, both standing together, our dear father Saint Francis looked at us closely with those eyes that reach and measure who knows what lengths. He examined you and me, judging, I believe, each of our hearts, the kind of person we were, the kind of person we are. You confronted that gaze as the rich and powerful man that you are, my father.”

“And you?”

“I cannot know how I was, great lord. I cannot know my worth.”

“Well, keep talking.”

“Then, our father spoke: ‘May the most beautiful of all the angels come forth. May a lesser angel of equal beauty accompany the supreme one. May the lesser angel bring a golden cup filled with the most delicate and translucent honey.’”

“And then?” the master asked.

The Indian serfs listened, listened to the pongo with a limitless attention, yet also afraid.

“My owner, as soon as our great father Saint Francis gave his order, an angel appeared, shimmering, as tall as the sun. He walked very slowly until he stood before our father. A smaller angel, beautiful, glowing like a gentle flower, marched behind the supreme angel. He was holding in his hands a golden cup.”

“And then?” the master asked once again.

“‘Supreme angel, cover this gentleman with the honey that is in the golden cup. Let your hands be feathers upon touching this man's body,’ ordered our great father. And so, the lofty angel lifted the honey with his hands and glossed your whole body with it, from your head down to your toenails. And you swelled with pride. In the splendor of the heavens, your body shone as if made of transparent gold.”

“That is the way it must be,” said the lord. “And what happened to you?”

“When you were shining in the sky, our great father Saint Francis gave another order. [‘From all the angels in heaven, may the very least, the most ordinary come forth. May that angel bring along a gasoline can filled with human excrement.’ ”

“And then?”

“A worthless, old angel with scaly feet, too weak to keep his wings in place, appeared before our father. He came very tired, his wings drooping at his sides, carrying a large can. ‘Listen,’ our great father ordered the angel. ‘Smear the body of this little man with the excrement from that can you brought. Smear his whole body any way you want and cover it all the best you can. Hurry up!’ So the old angel took the excrement with his coarse hands and smeared my body unevenly, sloppily, just like you would smear mud on the walls of an ordinary adobe house. And in the midst of the heavenly light, I stank and was with shame.”

“Just as it should be!” crowed the master. “Keep going! Or is that the end?”

“No, my little father, my lord. When we were once again together, changed, before our father Saint Francis, he took another look at first at you, then at me, a long time. With those eyes that reach the heavens, I don't know to what depths, joining night and memory and oblivion. Then he said: ‘Whatever the angels had to with you is done. Now, lick each other's bodies slowly, for

all eternity.’ At that moment, the old angel became young again. His wings regained their blackness and great strength. Our father entrusted him making sure that his will was carried out.”

APPENDIX C

APPEAL TO SOME DOCTORS

by José María Arguedas

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: José María Arguedas, *Complete Works, Volume V*. Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1983, 251-7.

To Carlos Cueto Fernandini and John V. Murra

They say we know nothing, that we are backward, that they will have to change our heads for a better one.

They say that neither does our heart suit the times, that it is full of fears, of tears, like that of the calandra lark, like that of a huge bull that has been butchered, that for that reason it is impudent.

They say that some doctors assert that about us, doctors who breed in our own land, who grow fat here or turn yellow. [A possible reference to yellow Andean flower that represented death, the *ayak'zapatilla*]

Let them talk, well, let them chatter, if they like that.

What are my brains made of? What is the flesh of my heart made of?

The rivers run roaring in their deepness. The gold and the night, the shore and the terrible night shape the rocks, the walls of the abyss where the river resounds; my mind, my heart, my fingers are made of that rock.

What is there at the river's bank that you do not know, doctor?

Take out your binoculars, your best glasses. Look, if you can.

Five hundred different potato flowers grow on the balconies of the abysses that your eyes do not reach; upon the earth in which night and gold, silver and day are merged. Those five hundred flowers, they are my brains, my flesh.

Why did the Sun stop for an instant, why has the shade disappeared everywhere, doctor?

Start up your helicopter and come up here, if you can. The condors' feathers, those of the smaller birds have been converted into a rainbow and are lit up.

The hundred flowers of quinoa that I planted on the mountain tops heat their colors in the Sun, the black wing of the condor and those of the tiny birds have turned into flowers.

It is noon; I am close to the sacred mountains: the great snow with yellow sparkles, with reddish patches, launches its light towards the heavens.

Don't run away from me, doctor, come close! Take a good look at me. How long must I wait for you?

In this cold land, I sow quinoa in a hundred colors, in a hundred types, from powerful seed. The hundred colors are also my soul, my inevitable eyes.

I, fluttering love, will take the idiotic stones that have destroyed you out of your brains. The sound of the precipices that no one reaches, the light of the reddish snow, frightening, shines

on the mountain tops. The happy juice of thousands of grasses, thousands of roots that think and know will spill your blood in the apple of your eye.

The beat of earthworms' looks that guard land and light; the clamor of flying insects I will show them to you brother, will make you understand them. The tears of the birds that sing, their breast that caresses equal to the aurora, will make you feel and hear them.

No difficult machine made what I know, what I suffer, what there is to enjoy in the world that I enjoy. On the land, from the snow that breaks bones until the fire of the ravines, before the sky, with his willingness and my strengths we will make of all of this.

Don't flee from me, doctor, come close. Look at me well, recognize me. Until when must I wait for you? Come close to me; lift me up to the cabin of your helicopter. I will invite you to the liqueur of a thousand different saps.

The life of a thousand plants that I cultivated, from the foot of the snows to the forests where their lairs have savage eyes.

I will cure your weariness that at times clouds you like a lead bullet, I will recreate you with the light of a hundred quinoa flowers, with the image of their dance in the gust of the winds; with the little heart of the calandra lark in which the whole world portrays itself, I will refresh you with the clean water that sings and that I tear off/extract from the wall of the abysses that cool our creatures with its shade.

Will I work centuries of years and months so that someone who does not know me and who I do not know cuts off my head with a small machine?

No, my little brother. Don't help sharpen that machine against me; come close, let me know you; look thoroughly at my face, my veins; the wind that goes from my land to yours is the

same, the same wind that we breathe; the earth on which your machines, your books and your flowers you count on, comes down from mine, improved, no longer angry, tamed.

Let them sharpen knives, let them make whips thunder; let them knead mud to disfigure our faces; let them do all of the above.

We are not afraid of death, for centuries we have drowned death with our blood, we have made it dance on known and unknown roads.

We know that they are trying to disfigure our faces with mud; show us like this, distorted, before our sons so they will kill us.

We do not know what has to happen. Let death walk towards us; let those men who we do not know come. We will wait for them on guard; we are sons of the father of all rivers, of the father of all mountains. Is it that now the world is worth nothing, brother doctor?

Do not answer that it is not worth it. Greater than my strength in thousands of years learned; than the muscles of my neck in thousands of months; in thousands of years strengthened, is life, my eternal life, the world which does not rest, that creates without tiring; that stops and forms like time, without end and without beginning.

Arguedas wrote the poem “Appeal to Some Doctors” originally in Quechua. The Spanish version – from the author himself – was published in *El Comercio* of Lima on the 10th of July, 1966. The original version appeared on the 17th of July, 1966 in the same newspaper.

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO MANUEL MORENO JIMENO

Letter from Jose Maria Arguedas to Manuel Moreno Jimeno

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: Forgues, ed. *José María Arguedas La Letra Inmortal*, 83-84.

[Typed letter.]. No date [July-August 1940]

Dear Enmanuel,

The semester exams have finished today at the school; just now finishing the work that you know well—I've read 220 tests—it gives me pleasure writing to you.

The much talked about trip to Mexico gave us two opportunities to be together, which have only increased my longing to see you here, in my house. I don't get tired of telling you about this desire of mine in all my letters. And now I'm reminded even more, as tomorrow Pepe Quimper arrives from Cuzco and will be in the house I believe until Monday. What really makes me mad is that others get here so easily and for you it's so difficult to come. I and *la Ratona* have been talking about this just now, because I'm going to look for a hen in the [village's] outskirts on my bike, to offer it to *don Pepe* [to eat]; when you come, we'll go together. Do you ride a bike?

We found the village a little sad, on the way back. The cold was noticeable and it was hard to get used to again. The last [few] Sunday fairs, which have been tremendous, have warmed our spirits up, and now we're very happy again in Sicuani, which is, and now I understand this more,

a really interesting and merry little town. Last Sunday I took 16 photographs of the fair, an almost complete report that I'll send to "La Prensa." My students, the best from last year, have continued to surpass themselves; now I've got worked out this project [of mine] to make a collection of readings for Human and Social Geography of Peru with these kids' work. It'll be a nice effort. You understand very well that these kids' style and expression is much more accessible and genuine for schoolchildren everywhere than those disgusting textbooks done by money-grubbing folks according to the curriculum. My desire was to do a Geography textbook, but maybe it won't be finished and then we'll do a book of readings. In my next letter I'll send you two of the semester tests from this class so you understand how right I am in encouraging this project.

On the afternoon of the 28th I'll gather a group of five students in my house to read to them the poem by Emilio Prados; I'll read as well your unpublished poems, knowing that in doing so I'm not breaking my given word, because [reading them to] these students can be considered the same as if only you and I have read them.

I've asked Alicia to send me the poetry book by Prados that can be found at Rosay's, where she can collect the money they owe me for "Canto Kechwa;" she's offered to send it to me, hopefully it gets to me so I can use it as a reading text. I'm going to ask you for something important. Flaco Tauro told me that he had several books for me, that they arrived at his post office box; you understand that it's always common courtesy to acknowledge receipt of what one receives, but I don't know what books these are and maybe there's something there that's well worth it; phone Flaco and tell him to leave the books packed up and addressed to you under your name at the Peña, and you can send them to me by the first [next] post.

Have you seen Capitán Méndez? I'm interested to know this, I'm writing to him as well here, so when you reply to me tell me what the result of your conversation with him was.

Almost since I arrived I've begun to work on "Yawar Fiesta;" I'm doing this with more will and fluency than never. And now understanding that it wasn't bad to delay it so much, now I have a little more solidity, and bad or good, this book will be everything that I'm capable of producing. I hope that it'll be the most faithful description, and the most complete, of all the Peruvian world of mountain villages, Indians, mestizos and of rootless people; that of the other side. I feel really prepared, when I write I have the conscience and the conviction, with enough passion and truth, that this Peruvian world lives within me, so beautiful, so full of pain and struggle, so great and noble, to be described in a novel. Hopefully I'll be able to do it. When you come, I think it will be finished. *La Rata* has to type it, and her company gives me courage.

When are you coming, brother? Come with Ali in January. With your eyes, the hills will turn green and the fields will liven up with the rain. The four of us will be the most beautiful group there is in Peru. Because never have I loved so much as I love Ali and you. If you could come with Oso, it would be ideal. But it's better that Oso not come, because he's capable of staying another seven years.

Say hello to your parents, to my namesake, to Ternero and to everyone in your home, and to you, the embrace of your sister *Rata* and your brother José.

José María

APPENDIX E

LETTER TO CELIA BUSTAMANTE

Letter from José María Arguedas to his first wife Celia Bustamante

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: Pinilla, ed. *Apuntes Inéditos*, 136.

[Hand-written letter]

Churín (ca. April 1944?)

Ratita,

The car [probably a postal service vehicle] came late last night and today I woke up at 7:30 to fetch your letter. The [postal] car leaves at 8:30 or 9.00; that's why I'm writing you these hurried lines. Your letter came to me like the contents of Whitman's poem. I can't tell you how good [to have it]! How I love you and admire you, and how much I love the moment you began to love me! With a companion like you, with your love, with your strong spirit next to me, we can well defeat death, and keep it in check until we've given life all our fervor! This may be the happiest moment in my life! I'm enlightened and purified because I've felt all the light of your soul. I've always thought there was more depth in your soul, that I hadn't yet reached into its last secret. Today I remember the light that I saw in your eyes the first time that you opened your soul a little to me, in the "Holanda," about eight years ago. Yes, I was innocent and sensitive and I could feel the beauty of things. But I had never encountered until then the greatest and absolute beauty, that of

the human soul when it is innocent, strong and capable of an infinite perfection! From that moment, you should have been the owner of my life—my guide and shield—because I’m weak and my heart was touched by the things I went through, instead of being hardening by them. I’ve also had terrible nights, these last three I needed Sedobral [his medication] and the hotel is really bad. I’ll tell you about it. Yesterday I noticed a sand flea and I have a swollen foot. Jorge looks after me and helps me. I’ll leave the day after tomorrow, when I’m fine. If the car doesn’t leave on time, no need to write me.

I adore you,

Aché [Arguedas’ nickname]

How wonderful about Juan!

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO ENRIQUE CONGRAINS

Letter from José María Arguedas to Enrique Congrains

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: Pinilla, ed. *Apuntes Inéditos*, 241-243.

[Typed letter]

Lima, February 2nd, 1959

Dear Enrique,

Yesterday I finished reading your novel. I'd hoped to take it to Supe, but I started it at night, in my bed, and it hooked me. I carried on until I finished it.

I have to admit that I read it with growing desperation. What have you done with your style, Enrique? I don't understand how your desire to modernize or refine your style has brought you to the extreme of twisting it to the extent of jeopardizing so seriously such a wonderful piece. Because the work is wonderful, in spite of this terrible wrapping in which you've offered it to us. I'm [caught] in the most complex of situations that a reading [of a work] has ever caused me. Despite the fact that the narrative parts are so difficult, so exasperating for their difficulty, the dialogues show who you are and what you know; they are so vividly rooted in the truth of our appalling population in the shantytowns, they arise so directly and mysteriously from their entrails,

from their own throat, that that's enough to make a formidable, captivating narrative of the book. But it's exasperating.

There is in you, my dearest Enrique, the author that I thought I'd found from the first lines I read of yours: the kid that has lived and felt in his flesh the most terrible of our drama in Lima, of this metropolis that grows by piling up the human waste from the provinces, piling them up and marinating them, in a product under whose horrifying appearance something great is being formed. How different is your story to those of Ribeyro! You're the life that'll walk more and more glowingly, which no one will stop. Our good Ribeyro is the refined and skeptical gentleman who'll never achieve a great work.

Maybe you've overlooked, because of other more pressing though less fundamental concerns a principle I've sometimes failed as well, out of selfishness; it's the following: the work is not for ourselves, for our own and personal pleasure; it's for others. When I reread my works in the light of this principle, I find all that I wrote to reveal, to denounced, to show what isn't known of our people and that's imperative to know, is better. When I moved away from this principle, I sweetened myself with words, with images more pleasant and necessary for myself, for my miserable being than for people who I'm committed to, who I owe my life to. I've suffered from horrors under this experience; I can confess to you that I've come to the point of shedding tears of desperation and shame. That happened to me not so long ago, when I was rereading some pages of "Los ríos profundos" that were just sent to me by airmail, the first copy. I have the feeling that with your novel in a certain way something like this happened.

Maybe you should have framed the scenario very clearly. It's presented in a very blurred way, with a certain mystery that's worth little compared to what it would have meant for Peru and other countries to show clearly what [the scenario] is, how it is. I'm not thinking about a

preliminary and direct description. I'm only thinking in a description. And then the analysis of the characters, of what goes on in their souls that you know and love so much. Why do you try to analyze it in such an "erudite" style? You can't know how much I've suffered for you while I was reading it. Although I was overcome with jubilation realizing that you'll do it, without any doubt that *you'll write* the great work that I'll still have the time to read. Because as a conception and even as an executed work, [your novel] "No una, sino muchas muertes" [No one but many deaths]" is a more vast and profound work.

I know, or I believe I know, the crisis that I suppose you were going through when you wrote this novel. Fortunately you're someone who was not born already *done*. You're the kind who're [continuing] to be made. How much I suffered to be able to express myself! What saved me was fear; I was afraid of betraying those who loved me and adopted me in my childhood. I believe that lately this sacred fire has been put out a little. Not in vain has one lived in this cruel city for more than twenty years. Here it seems that everybody and everything contribute to taming you, to domesticating you. What are we going to do! Thank goodness that I believe I've come to realize [this] when there's still some time.

The subject matter of your work can't be better; the plot contains the subject in all its magnitude. Quite an achievement. It's the container that doesn't fit, that's remained disturbed. And you know how important this is in relation to literature. But, however, I believe that your command of the language has increased. The book even feels to me as if it were a tough essay, addressing all the points, in this sense. Did I tell you that I wrote "Agua" three times? And only because it was the style that didn't convince me; the story line was exactly the same.

I beg you to pardon me for not having been aware immediately that your book was on sale. I knew it from Salazar, when I asked him to lend it to me. I immediately bought the collection. Later your mother brought me a copy. She talked to Celia.

I'll wait for your reply. Not only to exchange some views, but also to know about you. What can you tell me about Sofo? Don't you think that between Ribeyro and me, we'll bury him? That's the impression that's unanimously held in Lima; though the polemic would have him favored with the sale of few dozens copies more of his book.

(No signature)

APPENDIX G

HAND WRITTEN LETTER TO PEDRO LASTRA

Figure 1: Handwritten Letter to Pedro Lastra

Queridísimo Pedro:

No sé cómo expresarte mi
afecto. Jamás he tenido por nadie
la confianza, la fe que te profeso.
Déjame, hermano, o permíteme decirte
que me siento feliz cuando descubro
con orgullo que en algo me parasco
a ti. Trabájate sin quedarte hasta
concluir la novela que reinicié en
Santiago. Aquí recupero mis posibil-
dades creadoras peligrosamente opres-
das por el exceso de sufrimientos.
Tú sabes, hermano, que en gran parte
te debo a ti este milagro, y a tres
personas más de las cuales sólo
a una no conozco. Creo que la
única forma posible de retribuir tu
amor y energías que tú me diston
con el desinterés que casi desesperada-
mente buscaba, es concluir la novela.

Permíteme transcribir el homenaje
que he escrito en la obra, tanto con
el cual la comunidad de los suy-
marca al pie de el Juan Demetrio
Rendon Wilk ^{cuando parte hacia Lima. El} ~~que~~ ^{era uno de}
los personajes más difíciles de la
novela:

ama k'unk'aychu, churay,
ama pami k'unk'ayk'ichu;
Juzupak'mi ripukanki,
y Juzupak'mi kutimunki
k'elpt'chiz'k';
anka hina monchay k'wak'
maus pips zypandn zaptz.

(No has de olvidarte, hijo mío,
Juzupak'mi has de olvidarte:
Juz en busca de la sangre,
has de volver para la sangre,
postaleido;
como el grivilin que todo lo mira
cuyo vuelo nadie alcanza).

Es posible que a Rendon Wilks - el
Pera nuevo no desahogado de su tra-
dición y lanzado como una flecha al
infinito - no le alcance sus sue-
ños.

Te voy despedirme de nuestros
hermanos Dago, Toli, Edmundo. En
ti les doy un abrazo a ellos, a las tres
señoras que me auxiliaron a volver
a la plenitud de la vida, y a Chile,
esta maravillosa patria, casi libre.

A persona de la salinidad de
tu hermano indio

José María
22 de marzo, 1963.

Transcription of hand written letter from José María Arguedas to Pedro Lastra

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: Edgar O'Hara, ed., *Cartas de José María Arguedas a Pedro Lastra*, 13.

[Handwriting letter]

I don't know how to express my affection for you. Never have I had the confidence in someone like the faith I feel for you. Let me, brother, or allow me to tell you that I feel happy when I discover with pride that I'm somewhat like you. I'll work without suffering until the novel that I restarted in Santiago is finished. Here I'll recuperate my dangerously overshadowed creative possibilities because of the excess of suffering. You know, brother, that in large part I owe you this miracle, and to three other persons of which you only know one. I believe the only possible means to reward such love and energy that you [all] have unselfishly given me, which I almost desperately searched for, is to complete the novel.

Allow me to transcribe the *harawi* that I've written in the work, a song with which the community of Lahuaymarca took leave of the young Demetrio Rendón Wilka when he left for Lima. That one will be one of the most difficult characters in the novel:

Ama K'onk'aychu, churiy,
amapuni K'onk'ankichu:
yawarpak'mi ripukunki
yawarpak'mi kutimunki
kallpachask'a;
anka hina manchay k'awak'
mana pipa aypanan rapra.

(You shouldn't forget, my son,
you should never forget:
you're in search of blood,

you have to return for blood,
strengthened;
like the hawk that everyone looks at
whose soaring no one reaches)

It's possible that to Rendón Wilka – the new Peru not uprooted from its tradition and shot like an arrow into the infinite – doesn't catch up with his enemies.

I beg you to say goodbye to our brothers Dago, Poli, Edmundo. Through you I give them a hug, [and] to the three ladies who helped me return to the fullness of life, and to Chile, this immensely beloved, almost free homeland.

And forgive the solemnity of your Indian brother
José María

March 22, 1963

APPENDIX H

LETTER TO JOHN MURRA

Letter from José María Arguedas to John Murra

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: John V. Murra and Mercedes Lopez-Baralt, ed. *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 181-183.

[Typed letter]

Lima, December 17th, 1968

Dear John,

I received your letter here. I arrived on Friday, today is Tuesday. I was in Santiago a little more than six weeks. I left in the worse possible circumstances: after two weeks of agony, I returned to life and even managed to write the third chapter of my novel, a crucial chapter, given that I was able to get out of a sociological quagmire that didn't let me get off the ground. After two days of discussions with [Aníbal] Quijano, each one for some four hours, I came away with the clear conviction that the novel is coming along fine. Quijano thought that the two specific chapters (II and III) were bad for the same reasons that caused me to doubt their quality—they didn't reflect Chimbote's reality accurately. Fortunately, for the novel to be one, it has to be the reflection of who I am and through me, if it's possible, the reflection of Chimbote [itself], that is to say, of that elusive swarming mass of people and, through that seething mass, my own emotional

upheaval that's incredible, of present day Peru and of the huge I wouldn't say tormented but the provoked man of today. The creatures that I managed to create in my previous novels are the tenacious mark[s] of those who I met in Peru and with whom I myself identified, and for the same reason I modified, caricaturized or idealized infinitely. But I've only been in Lima for four days and already I don't feel like living anymore. In Santiago, I have a home, two mothers, a maid who is very similar to those who protected me in my childhood, many wonderful and fortunately unreachable women. Here I have a wife who's incredibly loving and intelligent, an unbeatable manager or director of a bookstore, an events organizer, the best, very active youth groups, a passionate partner in bed and, because of that, for me it's terrible. I'm back to Santiago, John. I don't know for how long. Sybila has accepted this solution with clarity and decisiveness which is good and she considers it the best [option], not because of what I'm explaining to you here, but because in my house it's impossible to work, because the atmosphere in Lima is crushing and, on the contrary, in Santiago I have a peaceful home, a superbly soothing atmosphere ... So maybe I'll be able to finish the novel. Now I'm barely able to write a letter and that's so because I'm writing to you. I've sorted out my things at the Universidad Agraria [Agrarian University]; they will give me a leave of absence until August 1969. I have what I need for me and my family to live until that date. In Santiago the entire edition of *Los ríos profundos* (5,000) was sold in ten months, another edition is coming out in a few days and also at any moment *Yawar fiesta* in the Editorial Universitaria de Santiago [University of Santiago Press]. I hope to live there until I finish the novel. Then, whatever happens, happens. The environment in Peru, as always, is for people with nerves of steel: mine, as you know, are torn to shreds. But I will have the novel done. The incentives are very big. I've never been held at such great esteem by good people. I can see now that you work hard as well. And our situations are very similar in many ways. You're considered a kind of

somewhat incomprehensible giant insofar as you show your potential wonderfully, but you don't exercise it, neither in lasting pieces nor with a fraction of your energy. "It will come", I tell them. He's given us so many things with those enormous hands of his. But, for this very reason people are waiting and keep their eye on you. You're quoted as being an example of the best of the best that ethnology can offer as an instrument and a possibility. Only yesterday at [the University of] La Molina, Aste, [Walter] Quinteros, Ratto and [César] Benavides were saying that. And with that, ethnology showed that it is far more fertile than sociology. Well, John, I'm dreadful, but I've just done a résumé and I'm going to send it to Rumania. Maybe only for such a meeting would I have the energy to go. And the Quechua course, when is it? I embrace you,

José

How come Carlos Cueto died!

APPENDIX I

LETTER TO LOLA HOFFAMNN

Letter from José María Arguedas to Lola Hoffmann

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: John V. Murra and Mercedes Lopez-Baralt, ed. *Las Cartas de Arguedas*, 181-183.

[Typed letter]

Lima, December 19th 1968

Mama Lola,

While I'm writing to you, the little house of the former hotel where I live is surrounded by exactly fourteen children between 4 to 10 years of age who scream with all the happiness and strength of their beautiful childhood. I found the house much untidier than ever; my writing desk, without exaggeration, has three piles of papers and magazines that hardly leave any room for the typewriter. Most of them are journals and books that have been arriving addressed to me, another group is papers and magazines of Sybi's who is now a kind of head of the editorial team of *Mujer* [Woman], a good magazine. The toilet in the bathroom you have to flush by submerging your arm up to the elbow [into the cistern]; the drapes are still hung with some pins that we call here safety pins; to find a pair of shoes Sybi herself has to go on all fours and spend about ten minutes while shouting out of impatience and anger. We've joined ourselves together, two disorganized people,

with the difference that at least I had someone who helped me to keep things in order most of my life.

Fortunately Sybila has understood the situation clearly. We're going to get a place nearby; I'm going to go to Chimbote for a couple of weeks, then I'll go on to Santiago until March or April; meanwhile Sybila will look into the paperwork necessary for the Co-op that we belong to, to be able to build a little, functional house for ourselves where I'd be able to work. If that's not possible, or something in Santiago, I could go to Caraz, which is a wonderful town near Chimbote, in the mountain area, at 2,000 meters above sea level and where my friend Jorge Angeles offered me the entire second floor of his house. The Museum at Puruchuco is baking through and through; it's located at the foot of a dry mountain range that reflects the heat of the sun like a mirror. On the other hand, I've come back again, when my energies began to waken, when my cracked inner world was making its way into a torrent; when the light of wisdom, of love and the contagious and irradiating vitality of yours [came to me], [then] the seething mass of people in Chimbote through which my own emotional upheaval was been emptied out and maybe the upheaval of the present day human being, never more heated up and spurred on, was already pouring into the course of a multiple story. There, in the story, anything could happen from the joy of a happy pig wallowing in the mud full of the essence of the world, to that of Maxwell, the American "peace corps" [volunteer] whose wonderful anxiety was transmitted to me more through words than through events, for sure, like something out of a novel that he lived through in the offices of the Folklore Department and in Puno, events that he told me about and that I've idealized and caricaturized. I have to go back and continue this work, there where I can do it better! As I told Dr. Leon [Arguedas' psychiatrist in Lima] yesterday, wanting a bit troublingly to die again; the pain in the back of my neck came back, and only like that was I aware that the pain had gone away. Santiago

is for me a complete sanitarium of encouragement, sedating; even Sybila, for my own way of being I think it means more for my work when she's far away from here where I only see her at night. When I'm gone, she multiplies herself; on Sundays this house is full of young people who work and have fun and are prepared to undergo any sacrifices for Peru's cause. They don't care about the disorder but [on the contrary] they create it and feel better in the disorder, or at least this is what it seems to me.

Last night, traveling from Lima here I came repeating an untranslatable song in Quechua that reminded me of my very much loved friend Racila. I've created two more stanzas, because we only remembered one whose contents I'll explain to you in Santiago. I've always written something while all my spirit was swimming in the light of these Quechua songs! I think I've found the one from *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*. This type of music inflames memory and melts thousands of lives like nothing else in a single torrent.

Sybi is a young woman and incomparably passionate and loving in bed. I keep feeling a kind of religious fear towards these kinds of passionate relationships. The vitality that it is spilled in those encounters leaves me as if I was spent and excessively rewarded. I have to do something important to receive this [kind of] good, at the end of the work! Meanwhile these gallant loves do me a lot of good, they move me. The other ones, I pour them into the story whenever it's necessary. You understand me, Lola. I've been and will always be a kind of fallen angel who seeks his redemption. I don't think I deserve life; or better, to deserve it I have to do something every day and that something can only be writing; only in Santiago, for now, can I manage this. Here I consume myself in the fire of thoughts, of absurd and somewhat suicidal reproaches, a dead end. I'm going there! It will be enough for me that you see me once every fifteen days to talk with that type of distance that there is between the Sun and the creatures that receive its heat; the closest,

the most respectful, the one that makes seeds sprout. When I'm midway through the novel it's possible that I could write it anywhere, especially in Caraz. I've felt much better writing to you. Yesterday and today I was dreadful and the children's choir doesn't let me to do anything, not even listen to the relaxation tape. In the 27 cottages of this hotel there are probably a hundred children and our little house is in a passage that links a third of the hotel with the street leading to the exit where there's an aqueduct, and just opposite the house there's a fantastic tree or two that form an arch that the children can climb and from there they scream like hell. As from tomorrow I'll go somewhere else. I came too early, because I can't move out until blessed Easter is over. Please receive regards from this good son of yours, old and unredeemable spoiled, despite the fact that he doesn't aspire to be anything more, and even less, than "Edmundo" or the "Cant."

José María

APPENDIX J

LETTER TO ARISTIDES ARGUEDAS

Letter from José María Arguedas to his brother Arístides Arguedas

Translated by Marvin Liberman and Isabel Bastos

From: Pinilla, ed. *Arguedas en Familia*, 278-281

[Typed letter with hand written final lines, closing and signature]

Santiago, May 12th 1969

Dear brother,

Since I took the pills [referring to his suicide attempt] I've been unable to recover my real health. Where I've been always better, since then, has been in this city. Here I live in the home of a lady [Angela Heinecke] who looks after me and loves [me] as if I was her son, and a psychoanalyst [Lola Hoffman] who's pulled me out of the states of inertia and deep depression that I'm prone to and that are now more acute since the [episode of the] pills. I believe you have to remember that since almost childhood I've fallen into those states of anxiety. In the boarding school at Abancay I felt anguish and a kind of imminent proximity to death. Another time, due to one of these attacks, I went from Lima to San Juan and to Yauyos. A really normal marriage would probably have cured those disorders; but Celia was, as you know, between very protective and tyrannical. With Sybila the thing was marred by my lack of understanding towards her where I

also didn't have the means to make myself understand that her lack of prejudice was supported by a wonderful loyalty and love. Then, her children were unconquerable despite the fact that I've always had the capacity to have children love me. In this trip everything went well, better than other times. Sybila relinquished [the presence of] my company with an enormous sacrifice on her part, because she knew that here I could write. This last time in less than two months I wrote two and a half chapters of the new novel. It's not a whole lot. A little more than a hundred pages that deal with a very difficult subject. Sybila and I agreed to meet in Arequipa. My father-in-law gets LAN [Chilean airline] tickets very cheaply and I went by land to Tacna, via Moquegua that I didn't know [before]. In Arequipa with the Pozo cousins and Uncle Abel [Pozo Navarro] we had a wonderful time. We were staying at the house of Helena Pozo who is married to a really affectionate and very generous doctor. There I wrote seven pages in seven days and Sybila typed 105 pages, and we also went for walks and had a great time. I came back here sure that at that pace I would finish the novel in three more months. And I've done nothing. In Quilpué, a village nearby, I managed to write something, staying with a colleague without equal as a friend and as an intellectual. Now I'm really unable to write anything. A little worse than in Lima. If I carry on like this another week, I'll return and go to Jorge Angeles's house in Caraz, where I felt so marvelously well. All these last years I've been like this, struggling against anguish and impotence. This is why I visited you so much less frequently; it wasn't for lack of love. Now I'm worried through and through because of the danger Sybila's told me about that Nelly's may be laid off work at her school. It'd be catastrophic. I've already told Sybil to send me a wire as soon as she knows the danger has been averted.

My case is so incredible. The novels that I've written are beginning to be taken seriously everywhere. A translation's being done in Italian of "Los ríos [profundos]" and "Todas las

sangres;” I’ve received a wonderful letter from a Russian writer who’s translating them into Russian. The letter is admirable for the understanding it shows for the book[s?] and a kindness and respect somewhere between fraternal and courteous in the way that she treats me. I’ve had to give up a trip to Bucharest and Berlin, where I was invited with all expenses paid, and I’ve just received a proposal for five months in Berlin to focus myself only on my books. Our great old man, brother , [and] those trips we both took with him to Pampas, Huancayo and later Yauyus! That trip that we made to Cuzco and Abancay and the Old man’s haciendas! [The “Old Man” was the uncle of Arguedas’ father and he was portrayed as a character in the novel *Deep Rivers*] The brutal way we were treated in our stepmother’s house; my proximity, so intimate, to the Indians in all that time; all of that formed the basis, the incomparable material for my works. Our rivers and precipices, those unparalleled characters that are the neighbors, mestizos, *chalo* [derogatory name given to mestizos by Indians] and the Indian communities ... But, my head hurts a lot. Tell Nelly, dear brother, that I think about her almost every day. What a strong and sweet woman! Tell her not to lose heart; I’ll be there very soon if something goes wrong and if I improve, I’ll be there in July. In any case we’ll find for her something, although I don’t think she’ll be dismissed from her job. Please take this letter to Nelly, as it’s for you, for your wife and for our sister. I’m suffering a lot. The prestige that I’ve achieved has really cost me tears of blood for which, in place of regretting them, I feel proud. Hopefully this pain in the back of the neck will go away. If I could have met Sybila ten years before, everything would have been better! She’s a tremendous woman but maybe a little too young for me, not for nothing, but because sometimes I misinterpreted things that were pure on her part. Hold me, brother and sister. I’m very sorry to be far away and to be unable to write. When Nelly pampers me I feel like a child; like when in doña Grimesa’s house I laid down to sleep in doña Cayetana’s lap or when I looked up to José Delgado and don Felipe Mayhua

or Victor Pusa like they were a sort of mysteriously protective trees. Here, Doctor Hoffman and señora Angelita love me almost as much as you all do, but I believe that now they can't do much more for me. In the end, I've decided to post this letter to Nelly's house. Remember me with the greatest affection possible. I have a lot from our old man, my heart and my soul.

Thus, as I am our old man was; with all my heart

Pepe

Our father used to take me at night time to the corridor and in seeing the sky my anguish went away. Then, between five to six years old, I was frightened at night.

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