

THE TRAGEDY OF BEING SINCERE: JOSÉ MARÍA ARGUEDAS, AUTHENTICITY AND SINCERITY

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ARGUEDAS, FRANQUEZA Y SINCERIDAD

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ABSTRACT

The following paper aims to show that the reception of José María Arguedas' most ambitious work, *Todas las Sangres* [*Every Blood*], and his suicide were the consequences of a generation that valued authenticity over sincerity. By making a critical analysis of the life and works of Argueda in the light of Lionel Trilling's concepts of "sincerity" and "authenticity", the following paper concludes that Argueda's natural sincerity might actually have been more complex and productive than the authenticity of his literary and academic peers.

KEY WORDS

José María Arguedas, Lionel Trilling, Authenticity, Sincerity, *Every Blood*.

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RESUMEN

En este artículo se intenta demostrar que la recepción a la obra más ambiciosa de José María Arguedas, *Todas las sangres*, y el suicidio del autor, fueron el resultado de una generación que valoraba la autenticidad sobre la sinceridad. Realizando un análisis crítico de la vida y obra literaria de Arguedas a través de los conceptos de "sinceridad" y "autenticidad" de Lionel Trilling se concluye que la sinceridad innata de Arguedas en realidad pudo haber sido a la vez más compleja, y más productiva, que la autenticidad de sus compañeros literarios y académicos.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Arguedas, Trilling, Franqueza, Sinceridad, *Todas las sangres*.

RESUMO

Neste artigo se tenta demonstrar que a recepção da obra mais ambiciosa de José María Arguedas, *Todos os sangues*, e o suicídio do autor foram o resultado de uma geração que valorizava mais a autenticidade que a sinceridade. Realizando uma análise crítica da vida e obra literária de Arguedas, através dos conceitos de "sinceridade" e "autenticidade" de Lionel Trilling, pode-se concluir que a sinceridade inata de Arguedas, na realidade, pode ter sido ao mesmo tempo mais complexa, e mais produtiva, que a autenticidade de seus companheiros literatos e acadêmicos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Arguedas, Trilling, Franqueza, Sinceridade, *Todos os sangues*.

“Let us assume man to be man and his relation to the world a human one. Then love can only be exchanged for love, trust for trust etc. If you wish to enjoy art you must be an artistically cultivated person; if you wish to influence other people you must be a person who really has a stimulating and encouraging effect upon others. Every one of your relations to man and to nature must be a specific expression corresponding to the object of your will, of your real individual life.”
(Marx 181)

In this excerpt Marx makes a call for sincerity, for a direct correspondence between what one is and what effect or relationship one wishes to have with the world. The Peruvian writer Jose Maria Arguedas answered this challenge. He was at least two selves and his life was a journey to first discern what they were, then to achieve them as best he could, and lastly, to remain true to them (Trilling 5). To a greater extent than most Arguedas managed to do this, he was the consummate example of earnestness; he was what Lionel Trilling called a sincere personality.¹ Despite, or perhaps because of his bicultural upbringing, Arguedas was one of a limited number of public individuals who maintained a steady eye and keel throughout his career. The tragedy is both that he was misunderstood and underappreciated by his peers and that this combination may have had a significant role in his decision to commit suicide (Franco 348).

Jose Maria Arguedas was born on January 18, 1911 in the province of Andahuaylas, in the southern Peruvian Andes. His mother, Victoria Altamirano Navarro, died when he was two and his father, Victor Manuel Arguedas Arrellano, an attorney, remarried four years later. Soon after, Jose Maria moved in with his stepmother, Grimanesa Arangoitia, and his stepbrother, Pablo Pacheco, ten years his senior. Jose Maria was white and Pablo dark-skinned with Indian features. This inequality prompted

1 Sincere, earnest protagonists who are named Ernesto appear in his short stories and in his novel *Los Rios Profundos*. From Word Reference English Thesaurus, 2013. Earnest: Zealous, sincere, determined, heartfelt, warm, diligent, enthusiastic, sedulous, hardworking, ardent, devoted, passionate, purposeful, wholehearted, assiduous, attentive, eager, fervent, impassioned; industrious.

Grimanesa to relegate Jose Maria to the servants' quarters where he lived except during the infrequent and short visits by his father. Jose Maria slept in the kitchen, went about unkempt and lice-ridden, and after working in the fields with the Indians he would share the miserable rations allotted them. His stepbrother saw to it that he was treated like an Indian by using him as his personal servant.

Arguedas learned to speak Quechua before he mastered Spanish, and was soon adopted as a member of the Indian community of servants. The affection and sense of belonging that he received from them, however, could not hide the fact that they too were orphaned and dispossessed members of the larger society. Arguedas was thus doubly marginalized; he was a white man in an Indian culture and he identified with an oppressed community that continued to be victimized by the government and church. Motivated by this, Arguedas became a linguist and social anthropologist because he was interested in the history and culture of Peruvian Indians and became a writer because he needed to give voice to the millions of disenfranchised indigenous persons.² His work was driven by a desire to unite the nation and by a subconscious need to reconcile his divided self.

Socialism, which was an early influence could have become a wedge in his life, he assimilated in such a way as to strengthen his commitment to his initial project. In 1931, at San Marcos University, Arguedas was dazzled by Cesar Vallejo's *El Tungsteno*, a work that provided him with what he referred to as "... la solución a todas mis dudas ..." (Arguedas, *Ríos Profundos* 61).³ He read the works of Jose Carlos Mariátegui, and Luis Valcárcel who were proponents of a kind of socialism that was inseparable from indigenism. They wove Engels' historical materialism into their interpretations of indigenous societies as Communist and these showed Arguedas how to incorporate socialist theory into his vision of an egalitarian Peru. The poet Cesar Vallejo and the essayist Jose Carlos Mariátegui founded Peru's Communist Party and Mariátegui also founded

2 His master's thesis was titled "The Evolution of the Indigenous Communities".

3 ... the answer to all of my doubts. Here and throughout, the translations are my own.

and directed *Amauta*, a leftist publication with a continental readership that had a special section dedicated to reporting abuses in the sierra. For Arguedas, *Amauta* represented "... la posibilidad teórica de que en el mundo puedan, alguna vez, por obra del hombre mismo, desaparecer todas las injusticias sociales" (Escobar 44).

The Communist party, *Amauta*, and the political movement APRA were important agents in Arguedas' social and political formation. Mariátegui, Victor Raul Haya de la Torre, Antenor Orrego, and Cesar Vallejo founded the anti-imperialist indigenist movement Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) in 1924, an organization that set out to bring the lessons of the Russian and Mexican Revolutions to Peru and had as its goal to organize Latin American nations against exploitation by U.S. imperialism.⁴ Despite the powerful and early socialist influence Arguedas never lost sight of his self-defined mission. Speaking about his assimilation of socialist ideology, he said: "¿Hasta donde entendí el socialismo?" "No lo se bien. Pero no mato en mí lo mágico. .. Fue la ideología socialista y el estar cerca de los movimientos socialistas lo que dio dirección, permanencia y un claro destino a la energía que sentí desencadenar durante la juventud" (Arguedas, *Ríos Profundos* 101).⁵ This direction led Arguedas to understand socialist principles as a means to create an inclusive Peru founded on the collectivist traditions of its Indian majority.

Arguedas took Mariátegui ideas with respect to: the inclusion of social class, the coexistence of reason and magical-religious sentiment, the destruction of feudalism as a preliminary to socialism, and lastly, the interpretation of the Indian's cultural past as a source to be tapped and not as a program to be implemented in the pursuit of Indian empowerment (Escobar 48) and incorporated these elements into his work by appropriating a (relatively) unknown cultural space and introducing into it practices that questioned

4 APRA ruled Peru from 1945-48.

5 To what extent did I understand socialism? I am not sure, but it did not destroy the magical in me. It was socialist ideology and being near the socialist movements that gave direction, steadfastness, and clear purpose to the energies that I felt unleashed during my youth.

the social order and political hegemony. His achievement and sincerity lie in his dedication to representing two seemingly irreconcilable camps: socialism and indigenous myth. Although in some of Arguedas' novels superstitions are seen as obstacles to progress, Arguedas did not think it necessary to do away with myth altogether. For Arguedas, as for Mariátegui, myths were needed as a means of structuring social praxis. Mariátegui considered the agrarian rituals and pantheistic sentiments (not ideology or philosophy) of the Indians as foundational and practical sources for a new social structure. This position differs from collectivism in that it does not reduce the individual and empty him by making of him a device to provide a product or service. In this use of myth the interests of the collective, as well as the author' use of allegories are preserved. Myth, the pantheistic beliefs of Indians, were as much part of their identities as the land they worked and Arguedas tried to weave these into the cloth of modern society in a way that would help said society evolve toward a more equitable state of relations between whites and Indians.

Arguedas believed that to create paths of understanding and possibilities for reconciliation that were increasingly complex, updated and evolved--as he had taught his students--it was necessary to be open to simultaneous realities that were not necessarily reconcilable. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Arguedas never tried to be authentic, he did not follow fashionable styles and topics in his writing, he had no time to be an international personality because he was consumed with being sincere, with being useful to those who needed him. Sincerity, Lionel Trilling defines as “.. a congruence between avowal and actual feeling ... a mind wholly at one with itself” (Trilling 2,4). He was not opposed to change but rejected socialist and capitalist paths to it as the only options. With each successive work of fiction Arguedas included more elements that helped him to embrace a larger social and geographic world. The culmination of this organic development of growth and inclusion is *Todas Las Sangres* (TLS). The creation of this novel, Arguedas tells us, “... me costó algunos años de meditación. No habría alcanzado a trazar su curso si no hubiera interpretado primero en Agua la vida de una aldea; la de una capital de provincias en Yawar Fiesta; la de un territorio humano y geográfico mas

vasto y complejo en Los Ríos Profundos” (Vargas 12).⁶ *TLS*'s underlying political structure is a combination of all those influences that Arguedas was exposed to, albeit reconfigured to serve the Indian cause. In *TLS*, Arguedas is faithful to himself as an artist and to what he believed to be his *raison d'être*; the improvement of everyday life for Indians. He is sincere in his calling as an artist because in *TLS* he does what an artist should do: use his life experience, knowledge, and imagination to create a fictional universe in which the values of a particular group of individuals, at a particular time, are brought to life. Arguedas, like the protagonist of *TLS* Rendon Willka, was not so much ambiguous as complex. What Antonio Polar says about Willka should in fact be applied to Arguedas; he writes that although Willka's apparent ambiguity could be problematic for the reader it “... es fidedigno testimonio de la historia de un mundo excepcionalmente complejo” (Polar 252), and this was Arguedas; a true and faithful chronicler of who he was.⁷

TLS is a fictional universe that brings together all of Peru's people and institutions; a fictional representation of Indian suffering, existence, and oppression whose intentions was that the world outside of the Sierra may see their plight and the virtues that they show in responding to it. The novel also speaks to the communities themselves by showing them a possible path to follow and a better future that could be found at the end of that path. As a member of a community with an almost absolute sense of collective identity as inseparable from individual identity, one in which individual acts and their consequences were directly related to the group at large Arguedas' project to reconcile and give form to his own life extended to a national project. In doing so, *TLS* was more in tune with Latin America's nineteenth-century authors whose passionate investment in nationalism led them to write romances that functioned as unifying allegories. These nationalist romances like, Jorge Isaac's

6 [The novel] required of me some years of reflection. I could not have been able to trace its course if I had not first in *Agua* depicted the life of a village, the life of a provincial capital in *Yawar Fiesta*, and that of a broader and more complex human and geographical territory in *Los Rios Profundos*.

7 Is a true testimony to a world that is exceptionally complex.

Maria (Colombia 1867), Alberto Blest Gana's *Martín Rivas* (Chile 1862), and Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's *Facundo: Civilización y Barbarie en las Pampas Argentinas* (1845) saw fragmentation and the absence of a nationalist identity as catastrophic for individuals and the collective, the kind of preoccupation that Arguedas understood intimately.

Unfortunately, he was in many ways a man who outlived the world that he was writing for; *TLS* was published during the Boom era in Latin American letters (1960-73), a period defined by its focus on diffusion, experimentation, non-linear narrative, and contempt for the populism and positivism of the national romances. The novel was, like its author, too sincere for a time that sought authentic representations of works that echoed the politics of the time. They, novel and author, were judged by the standards of socialist realism and those undeclared principles that Latin American Boom authors had adhered to, namely technical innovation and protagonists whose self-interest bordered on solipsism. Initially, *TLS* was evaluated not on its merits as a work of art but, on one level, as an example of socialist realism and on the other as an example of Boom literature, that is, literature that was supposed to reject the realist-positivist literary tradition in Latin America in exchange for more fashionable and authentically artistic literary trends imported from novels written in French and English.

The Cuban Revolution, an event that altered the political history of Latin America, was an experience that Arguedas shared with the Boom writers but which led them to different conclusions. After 1959 it was impossible for Arguedas (and others) to think of the de-colonization of the sierra without simultaneously thinking about socialism. The Boom writers were for a time sympathetic to the revolution and its ideals, but were not interested in writing the kind of political novels that Arguedas felt the social conditions required. Writers like Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, and Carlos Fuentes, were disdainful of the social novel and plainly hostile to regionalist fiction which they considered anachronistic and embarrassing. They were part of the new generation and Arguedas' *TLS* was judged a regression into the old indigenist model, something he was thought to have overcome with his novel *Los Ríos Profundos*.

The socialist realist standard to which writers like Vargas Llosa believed the novel should be held to is antithetical to what novels are but was a standard to which Arguedas, albeit mistakenly, subscribed to. In this Arguedas shared company with the many Soviet writers who were compelled to believe in the utilitarian idea of art as propaganda (based on what was called historically concrete reality by the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers), and judged that socialist realism was the standard by which revolutionary literature should be measured. The First All-union congress was established in April of 1932. The Statute of the Union of Soviet Writers in 1934 stated that socialist realism:

... is the basic method of Soviet literature and literary criticism. It demands of the artist the truthful, historically concrete representation of reality in its revolutionary development. Moreover, the truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic representation of reality must be linked with the task of ideological transformation and education of workers in the spirit of socialism. (Booker 665).

Arguedas was receptive to these limited criteria for evaluation not because he believed in socialist cant but because they were taken seriously by his peers, by his fellow Peruvians, and this to him was always important.

Arguedas however, shows his weariness for ideology in his novels; he shows us why he could not be what some expected of him. We see this in his complex relationship with socialist ideas, and his vision for the development of the Indian communities, Peru, and Latin America. Arguedas responded to the Communist alternative by taking from socialist ideology what could be useful to the Indian cause but, conscious of the dangers of conformity, he was unwilling to have the Indians trade in the landed gentry for the Communist Party leaders who would exploit them for their own ends. Because Arguedas was raised in a bicultural environment that was as much Christian as pantheistic, he did not feel the need to sacrifice his autonomy to any one ideology. Programs that called for absolute submission must have sounded too much like the Christianity used by whites to control Indians for them to have appealed to him. He was not interested in programs that sacrificed man to plan.

Although *TLS* shares common roots with the leftist ideas of the time, its own ideological structure alludes to them, but is not derivative. Irrespective of the views Arguedas shared with Mariátegui and Valcárcel the vision that he presents in *TLS* is entirely his own creation. For better or worse, his relationship with the cause was intensely intimate and this led him to be a realist with respect to the petty bourgeoisie but romantically utopian about Indians. Arguedas learned that ideas and ideologies were used to justify violence. Or as Conrad's Marlowe puts it "The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretense but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea- something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to." (Conrad 14).

What Arguedas offered in *TLS*; pluralism, complexity, solidarity, synthesis and creation was not welcome by those who promoted ideologies of dichotomy and division; those who prided themselves in having a dialectical understanding of culture and failed to see it as it bloomed in their own front lawn. Those who ostensibly hoped to see oppressed people unite and build their way forward did nothing more than divide and destroy a novel that was more true to their ideas than they themselves were.

This was all made possible by the banner of authenticity that *TLS* detractors waved before them. They saw themselves as the authentic inheritors of Latin American literary tradition, of socialist ideology, and of a modern literary aesthetic. They subscribed to the modernist belief that aesthetic progress of an artist lies in the continual extinction of his personality from the work so that the personality of the artist finally refines itself out of existence (Trilling 7). This sort of insincere rhetoric that claimed the author as a channel of divine inspiration must have sounded to Arguedas like Christianity and so he continued instead to speak of what he knew which was what he was. He could not be an authentic Boom writer. He could not perceive of a self as separate from the group, and insofar as the formal and stylistic *jetés* that occupied his literary counterparts, his concerns, as has been noted, were others.

The by now infamous event at which Arguedas and *TLS* met their critics occurred during a round-table discussion by sociologists and literary critics sponsored by the Institute of Peruvian Studies. They failed to appreciate the novelty of his project and its attempt to reveal the mechanisms of inequality in the sierra and concluded that Arguedas' interpretation did not reflect what they understood to be the social and political reality of the Andes. The attacks Arguedas suffered and his responses to them were later published in *¿He Vivido en Vano? Mesa Redonda Sobre Todas Las Sangres 23 de Junio 1965*. The leftist intellectuals assembled told Arguedas with different degrees of explicitness that his description of castes did not correspond to reality and that the novel did not provide a useful myth for the transformation of Peru (Llosa, *Utopía Arcaica*, 262). One of the participants summed up the opinion of the sociologists when he concluded that, "Soy un admirador de la novela pero no creo que es un testimonio valido para la sociología" (Salazar Bondy 30).⁸

Of course, Arguedas was writing as an author and not an anthropologist; nevertheless he submitted to the standards used by these critics because they were his peers, but most importantly because he wanted, as he believed they did, to produce writing that would be useful to the cause, and this kind of writing was often defined as socialist realist.

Alberto Escobar, who edited the transcription of the colloquium, tried, along with other members of the literary camp, to come to Arguedas' aid by establishing ground rules that would distinguish comments that arose from an aesthetic and literary perspective from those that came from that of the social scientists. His attempts failed, however, and *TLS* and Arguedas were trounced by the social critics. Because Arguedas saw his identity as inseparable from the common effort to bring social progress to Peru, and because he believed that his novels had to be a revelation of the socio-political reality and its meaning if they were to be anything at all, the criticisms wounded him deeply (Polar 23).

8 I am an admirer of the novel but I don't think it is a valid testimony for sociology.

The session ended when Luis Valcárcel, under whom Arguedas had studied, and who as the moderator that evening had remained silent throughout, called for an end to the roundtable. Arguedas was particularly ill-prepared for the salvos leveled at him that night because he had for some time been descending into the emotional and psychological chaos that so often plagued him. The night before the event he wrote to his friend and fellow anthropologist John Murra: “Estoy pasando por una crisis que en lugar de resolverse a favor se agudiza más y más. Tengo la impresión de que me estoy embotellando en forma peligrosa” (Arguedas, *Cartas*, 127). Less than a year later the crisis culminated in his first suicide attempt.⁹

The ill-founded nature of the criticisms that Arguedas’ literary peers had can be understood by focusing on one representative case. Mario Vargas Llosa, perhaps Arguedas’ best known critic, in *La Utopía Arcaica: Jose Maria Arguedas y Las Ficciones Del Indigenismo* (1996) Llosa sets forth the basis of his criticism by writing that “Lo que Arguedas ‘transculturo’ del quechua al español no fue la realidad preexistente, sino en gran parte inventada por el, una experiencia subjetivizada, sesgada y creada a partir de deseos, visiones y fantasías, una fabulación literaria” (158) and, earlier in the same work, points out that “... Arguedas no documenta una realidad indígena pero si inventa un mundo de la sierra matizado por sus experiencias personales” (87).¹⁰

However, in *La Verdad de las Mentiras* (2002), Llosa cites these same characteristics as foundational to our definition of fiction. He writes that “no se escriben novelas para contar la vida sino para transformarla añadiéndole algo”(7), quotes Valle Inclán, the turn-of-the-century Spanish

9 I am going through a crisis that instead of resolving itself favorably is becoming more and more acute. I have the feeling that I am becoming bottled up in a dangerous way.

In 1969, Arguedas’ second suicide attempt was successful.

10 What Arguedas transculturated from Quechua to Spanish was not a preexistent reality, but was in large part invented by him, a slanted and subjective historical experience created from wishes, visions, and fantasies, a literary fable.

Arguedas does not document the indigenous reality but instead invents a world of the sierra that is colored by his personal experiences.

novelist, who says “Las cosas no son como las vemos sino como las recordamos” (13), and repeats the point by saying that “Recuerdos e invenciones se mezclan en la literatura de creación de manera a menudo inextricable para el propio autor.; la literatura es siempre simulacro, una ficción en la que lo recordado se disuelve en lo soñado”(13).¹¹

Llosa labels Arguedas as the last of a generation for whom social commitment took precedence over artistic development and who adopted or mimicked a revolutionary pose. He sees TLS as Arguedas’ greatest effort to comply with this mandate and goes on to say that Arguedas was not a political writer for most of his life and that therefore the great revolutionary effort at the end of his life was, presumably, for the sake of posterity. There are other possible readings of Arguedas’ political position in TLS: that his youthful idealism had been rekindled by the Cuban Revolution, that his writing had matured to the point where he felt it could include world politics, or that he had evolved and felt capable of including international politics in a tale set in the Andes. The thinking behind this last interpretation is that as one gets older one tends to become less inhibited and not, as Llosa implies, more so.

Llosa’s criticisms can be further attenuated if we consider the relationship between these two Peruvian writers. In 1936 Arguedas had already penned his collection of short stories, *Agua*, was soon to begin his first novel, *Yawar Fiesta*, and had completed his studies in San Marcos. That same year Mario Vargas Llosa was born. The chronological distance between the two suggests that Arguedas could have been a literary father figure to Llosa although there were great cultural differences between the two. Llosa was a coastal urbanite who would later become a cosmopolitan exile in Europe while Arguedas remained close to his Andean birthplace.

11 Novels are not written to tell the story of our existence but to transform it by adding something.

Things are not as we see them but as we remember them.

Memories and inventions combine themselves in literature in such a way that they are often inextricable even for the author himself... literature is always simulacrum, a fiction in which what is remembered dissolves into what was dreamt and vice versa.

Arguedas was a known and respected writer at the time that Llosa began his own literary ascent in Peru. As early as 1955 Llosa referred to him as, “Un gran creador, uno de los mas puros y originales que a nacido en America” (Perez & Garayar 256).¹² And in 1981 he maintained that few, if any, of his countrymen were favorite authors of his with the exception of Arguedas with whom he “...he llegado a tener una relación verdaderamente pasional, como la que tengo con Flaubert o con Faulkner ...” (Perez & Garayar 252).¹³

It would be simplistic to explain all of Llosa’s criticisms as an attempt at literary parricide of the kind that James Baldwin tried to perform on Richard Wright, but it must be noted that the Boom writers were committed to killing off their literary and ideological forefathers; for Llosa this included Valcárcel and Mariátegui, both of whom have their ideas discredited in his criticism of TLS, and that the suggestion gains further plausibility when comparing *Los Rios Profundos* (a novel that Llosa considered Arguedas’ best) to *La Ciudad y Los Perros*, Llosa’s first literary success. So that one does not stray too far in suggesting that the careers of these two writers have enough in common to warrant questions about the motivation behind Llosa’s criticisms.

Labeling TLS, and by extension Arguedas, as inauthentic and unhelpful to the social cause was both unfair and tragic. Judging him by the standards of the Latin American Boom ethos was equally so. Tragic because of Arguedas’ death and unfair because those who turned their backs on TLS, blinded by ideology and literary fashion, failed to recognize not only an important, original, and complex work, but also a bold and humanist proposal for art to be socially relevant without being a tool of politicians and ideologies. Arguedas’ work and life were inseparable. In a letter to the president and students of la Universidad Agraria de Lima on November 27 he wrote : “Me retiro ahora porque siento, he comprobado que ya no tengo energía e iluminación para seguir trabajando, es decir para justificar

12 A great creator, one of the most pure and original to be born in America.

13 ...have come to have a really passionate relationship, like the kind that [I have] with Flaubert or Faulkner.

la vida.” On the 28th, and in one of the University’s classrooms he shot himself (Ortega 77). His work and life were an attempt to achieve “... la personalizacion, la construccion de una entidad humana que a partir de sus propios valores obtenga su historia” (Ortega 79).¹⁴

Beginning in 1973, *TLS* began to be reevaluated by critics.¹⁵ Its effort to integrate Quechuan language and culture into Spanish was by this time generally applauded and its autochthonous roots were understood as nationalistic emblems that supported a sovereign Peruvian identity, independent of first world influences.¹⁶ Antonio Cornejo Polar begins his study of Arguedas’ works, *Los Universos Narrativos de José Maria Arguedas* (1997), by criticizing those writers who had been dismissive of him: Julio Cortázar, Emir Rodríguez Monegal, Luis Harss, and Vargas Llosa. Polar pays critical attention to the many sides of *TLS* and appraises it on its own merits; he points out some of the contradictions in the novel but remains sympathetic to the goal proposed in the title, that of showing all of the races of Peru and to the irreconcilable differences that present themselves in such a project.

Polar sees Arguedas’ reorganization of society into capitalist roles for the lords of the land, impoverished whites, and Indians as a plausible way of depicting the power relationships in the Andes and predicting future shifts in them. He says that in *TLS* Arguedas “Continua reafirmando los valores excelsos de la población nativa” and is still “Fiel a una realidad que cambia sin tregua” (261).¹⁷ In allowing the leeway due an ambitious work like *TLS*,

14 I am stepping down because I have proven to myself that I no longer have the energy or inspiration to continue working, to justify my life.


Personalization, the construction of a human entity that could, through its own values, come to have a history.

15 The new appreciation with which Arguedas’ literature was accorded after his death was no doubt affected by speculation over the reasons why, and the fact that he took his own life. Death, Malraux once wrote, turns life into destiny.

16 In *TLS*, Quechuan culture is presented as a worthy addition to the patrimony of humanity and an alternative to the western ideals commonly presented in bourgeois literature as universal ideals.

17 Continues to reaffirm the noble values of the native population. ... faithful to an ever-changing reality.

Polar recognizes the novel's attempt to reconcile seemingly opposed worlds (the city and the country, Quechuan culture and Marxist ideology, etc.) in order to depict a new reality, a synthesis that can come to be. Polar, albeit indirectly, recognizes Arguedas' courage and sincerity, his unfailing commitment to those who were like him, those who needed him and those that he aspired to be like. Arguedas attempted at something more difficult than the dichotomies offered by capitalism and socialism, what he hoped to depict was a middle way, one that recognized the modern capitalized world in which Indians must live but to do so without sacrificing the pillars of Indian culture and identity. He feared them losing sight of who they were as sincerely as he feared losing his own sense of self.

The following reflection about one of Arguedas' protagonists reminds us of who he was and how his type of sincerity led to tragedy. "The strange sensitiveness of Ernesto infuses its own fragrance which floats over the scenes. Essentially different from his schoolmates, he reflects the legacy of his mythical, indigenous animism, and his closeness to nature enables him to identify joyfully with all living things. For that reason he is unable to understand the meaningless act of stamping on a cricket without considering the sweetness of his voice, "... y me dedique a apartar los grillos de las aceras donde corrían tanto peligro" (Rodríguez -Peralta 226).¹⁸ The tragedy for us and for Arguedas was not to have recognized his value and so blinded by vanities rejected a great humanist from enjoying the recognition and gratitude that his work had earned him. 

Lista de Referencias

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18 And I devoted myself to removing the grasshoppers from the sidewalks where they were in so much danger.

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