

## Perceptions of Peru's Sierra and Costa from the literature of José María Arguedas

M. Elizabeth Scarborough and  
Paul Simpson-Housley, York University

**Abstract:** The paper examines the use of mountains as metaphor in the literary work of José María Arguedas, specifically from his novel *El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo* (*The Fox From Up Above and The Fox From Down Below*). The paper addresses Arguedas's perceptions of the mountains of Peru and examines the contrasts drawn by Arguedas between the mountains and the coast of the country in which he lived. Arguedas used these physical geographical features and locations to represent human beings who come from such locations, and to illustrate the differences between inhabitants of these areas. Arguedas creates a parallel between differences in the geographic locations and differences in the people from such locations.

*Key Words:* Sierra, Costa, Foxes, crillolo, cholo, Chimbote

Literature from around the world makes use of physical geographic phenomena in order to illustrate and refer to various human conditions and emotions. This technique can be seen in novels such as Mary Shelley's (1818) *Frankenstein*, wherein she uses the Arctic to represent the cold, desolate, lonely life of the monster. It is also seen in Emily Brontë's (1847) *Wuthering Heights*, as the author uses the physical geographies of Thruscross Grange and Wuthering Heights as representations of the families and individuals who reside in each location. Mountains, for example, are referred to often in literature and are utilized by the author as simile and as metaphor to represent an idea, belief or emotion. This may be noted in Edgar Allen Poe's (1838) *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* and in H.P. Lovecraft's (1936) *At the Mountains of Madness*, a novel that was an extension of Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym*. In both of these pieces of literature mountains are used as an allegory for the human condition. Lovecraft particularly uses the mountain as a metaphor for insanity and for the ways in which humans are driven to madness. It is

the primary objective of this paper to examine the use of mountains as metaphor in the literary work of José María Arguedas, specifically from his novel *El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo* (*The Fox From Up Above and The Fox From Down Below*) (Arguedas 1971, 2000).<sup>1</sup> This paper will take into account the ways in which Arguedas uses mountains to symbolize the people who come from them, and the relationships they form with those from the coastal region of Peru. The history of his life must be taken into account while completing such an examination as his personal experiences are the driving force of the novel and of his use of mountains as metaphor.

José María Arguedas, born in the small Andean city of Andahuaylas in 1911, is undisputedly one of the greatest Peruvian authors of the twentieth century (Ortega 1999). He has published such works as *Yawar Fiesta*, *Diamantes y Pedernales*, his most celebrated novel, *Los Ríos Profundos*, and *Todas Las Sangres* (Arguedas 1941, 1954, 1958, 1964). Owing to the death of his mother when he was only three years old, and to the fact that he was raised by his father and stepmother, Arguedas received little of the attention he needed from his parents, and was influenced significantly by the Indians of the southern Sierra where he grew up (Ortega 1999, 1). These Indians taught Arguedas how to communicate in Quechua, as well as how to appreciate and love the land and the country in which he was born. As a teenager, Arguedas was taken from his home in the Sierras to complete school as an acculturated young white Peruvian in the city of Ica, in the desert coastal region of Peru, and later in the city of Huancayo, where he began writing for a student magazine. This change in geographical location and cultural setting must be noted when examining Arguedas' novel *El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo* as his personal experiences with the Sierra and the Costa of Peru figure prominently in the novel. Arguedas continued his formal education at the University of San Marcos in Lima, where he focused on his writing and the study of anthropology (Castilla 1999). He pursued a career as a secondary school teacher in Lima, then continued on as a university professor, as well as serving on various boards and committees for the preservation of Indian culture and folklore (Ortega 1999, 1). Tortured by political injustices and the prospect of suicide for much of his adult life, Arguedas began writing *El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo*, his last novel, as a means of emotional purging and as an attempt to regain his will to live and to write (Ortega 2000, xi-xxxii). He was struggling at the time with the end of his marriage to Celia Bustamante, his wife since 1939, and the beginning of a new marriage with Sybila Arrendondo, which had commenced just two

years earlier in 1967 (Castilla 1999, 2). However, prior to completing the novel, he shot himself twice in the head while in his office at University Agraria La Molina, and died four days later without having regained consciousness. He passed away on December 2, 1969 at the age of 58 (Ortega 1999).

José María Arguedas was a man torn apart by two conflicting segments of his very psyche. He was an educated, white Peruvian man on the outside, but a large part of him remained a Quechua speaking Indian from the Sierra, as he stated himself in his diary of *El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo*, when he said "...I am 'de la lana', as you used to tell me; that is, from the 'high country', which in Peru means an Indian, a highlander..." (Arguedas 2000, 55). All of his life, his two identities seemed to be at war, and this constant struggle of his psyche is apparent in the novel discussed in this paper. According to César Caviedes:

This experience turned Arguedas into a man deeply split between the Indian values and world perception that he had acquired as a child and the values and cultural attitudes imprinted on him as a cultured Peruvian from the coastal lowlands...(Caviedes 1987, 59)

Complementing Caviedes on this impression is a passage by Mario Vargas Llosa from *José María Arguedas: Entre Sapos y Halcones*:

... he found the Indian way of life to be more humanistic and less alienating than life according to Western values (Vargas Llosa 1978, 43-45).

*El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo* is a novel of great importance regarding the demise and ultimate destruction of the fishing town of Chimbote on the northern coast of Peru. Until the 1950s, Chimbote was a beautiful, pristine town of about 2,000 inhabitants. In the years that followed Chimbote was transformed into a 'boom town', bustling and growing exponentially with the arrival of the anchovy fishing industry. In only two decades, the city grew to more than 200,000 inhabitants, many of whom were from the Sierra and who had come in search of work and in hopes of becoming prosperous. The effects of the anchovy industry on the city were devastating, as seen here in an excerpt from Julio Ortega:

The beaches were destroyed by the fishing industry, which had grown without plan or design inside the urban area and

expelled its wastes directly into the bay, today an ecological disaster of dead waters, fenced in by a sanitary cordon of rocks, infested by rats (Ortega 2000, 1

In a period of only a few decades, Chimbote was metamorphosized from a small fishing village on the Peruvian coast into a cesspool of disease, brothels, greed, and poverty, transforming not only the physical landscape and ecological aspects of the area, but also its inhabitants, many of whom were Indians and highlanders from the Sierra. The coast was a place of pestilential environment that nevertheless continued to call to workers from the Sierra with the promise of profit. The ‘fox from below’ tells it best when he says to the ‘fox from above’:

... here it feels like a mishmash of dying and dawning, of what seethes and spatters, of what ferments and turns sour, of being calmed down by force or by sheer effort. All that ferment is here (Arguedas 2000, 87).

In the novel, the ‘foxes’ are native gods that represent the world of up above (the Sierra), and the world of down below (the Costa). Their occasional dialogue in the novel gives insight into the contrast between the two geographical regions, not only physically, but more importantly on a human scale (Ortega 2000, 2). According to Columbus, the ‘foxes’ come from an ancient Andean legend in which they are “deities of the night and of the moonlight, mysterious cult figures, ... never deities of the first rank” (Columbus 1986, 30). In Andean mythology, the meanings of the foxes shift continuously from one tale to another, and Arguedas uses this ancient myth to fit his own needs in this novel.

*El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo* is an extremely complex novel, filled with allegory, metaphor, and symbolism. It has a plethora of characters and a proliferation of voices, most of which are unusually complex in themselves, and are interconnected in one way or another. The characters consist of persons from the coast (*criollos*), the Sierra (*cholos*), and North America. They serve as illustrations and as symbols from the very regions of their origin, and may also be identified by distinct social and economic strata (Rowe 2000, 284). More central to the novel, these characters or ‘voices’ also serve as an illustration of the attempt at homogenization of the city of Chimbote. In the course of the novel, the reader is introduced to a veritable glut of characters, some of whom are merely presented through the conversation of other characters, and some who are met as primary persons in the novel.

What is so essential regarding these characters and their geographical origin is that although they came to Chimbote from three distinct geographical regions, within and outside of Peru, they were all brought together into one coastal community. Throughout the novel, the reader continues to see these characters intermingle with one another, and to see them communicate regardless of their differences in terms of geographic origin or socio-economic status. *El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo* begins with the story of the highlanders and their lives in Chimbote. Primarily, the beginning of the book focuses on Chaucato, the fish boat captain, and his crew. However, this first part is also the section in which the reader is first introduced to Maxwell, during the time that he is working for the Peace Corps. The highlanders in this chapter are portrayed as being relatively uneducated and rough, but pure of heart. They are, for the most part, honest, hard-working men who are trying their best to make better lives for themselves and for their families. These men are ruled by the anchovy fishing industry and their lives are dictated by the amount they catch at sea. They are also controlled by the parent company and its 'big fish' of the industry, in Chaucato's case, a man by the name of Braschi, who is the powerhouse of the company that owns Chaucato's boats, and virtually all of these men as well (Arguedas 2000, 30). Caviedes describes his character as: "an evil man, a reckless exploiter who at first used to mix with the humble and encourage them to work for a profit, but who later developed into a manipulator who rarely returned to Chimbote, preferring to direct his fishing empire from Lima through a hand picked *mafia*" (Caviedes 1987, 66). As the chapter unfolds, the reader comes to learn that Braschi is taking these men for all they have... he is simply using them to gain what he wants and to secure more wealth and prestige for himself. Chaucato and his men are being made victims by the company, and are getting nothing in return. They are living in filthy shantytowns because they are poor, uneducated, unskilled highlanders. The coast and its inhabitants are eating them up, taking advantage of them, and holding them down by keeping them in poverty (Arguedas 2000, 27-55). This point is illustrated in an exchange between Chaucato and one of his men on the deck of the ship:

...how come other skippers who haven't been fishin' as long as you, who are less deservin' – you're such a pal of Braschi's, practically his father, and you're the one who's taught almost all the trawler skippers how to find anchovies and net 'em – how come you got an old boat, a hundred tonner, when they

gave these other guys, who don't know near as much, two hundred- and even two-hundred-and-fifty-ton trawlers, so they can earn double what you do (Arguedas 2000, 29)?

These other men, to whom Chaucato's fisherman is referring, are not highlanders, but men from the coastal regions. It is stated here that Chaucato was wronged by Braschi because he came to Chimbote from the highlands, and was not seen as worthy of the wealth and prosperity he so desired and deserved. The change in Chimbote and the importance of the anchovy fishing industry and its bosses is illustrated as well in the following excerpt from *The Andean Air Mail and Peruvian Times*:

...by 1970, nineteen fish-processing plants operated out of Chimbote and the town had grown to 111,000 inhabitants. By 1980, the population had doubled. The four largest plants belonged to Luis Banchero (Braschi), two were owned by American companies, three were operated by Italian entrepreneurs, two were owned by Jewish merchants, another pair belonged to Spaniards, one was owned by Yugoslav-Argentines, and the rest were in the hands of powerful Peruvian capitalists, among whom the Gildemeister family occupied a conspicuous place (Andean Air Mail and Peruvian Times 1970, 57)

It is evident in this first chapter that the highlander is constantly being tested, corrupted, and polluted by the city of Chimbote and by the coastal inhabitants and their vices. After coming in from their anchovy fishing, the men go straight to the brothels for booze and prostitutes. They are lured into the filth and the moral corruption of the coast by their declining situations and shattered dreams of prosperity, as is stated by the Fox from up Above:

Two thousand five hundred years ago Tutaykire, the warrior from up above, son of Pariacaca, was detained in Urin Allauka, a yunga valley of the world of down below; he was detained by a harlot virgin who awaited him with her bare legs widespread, her breasts uncovered, and with a large jar of corn beer. She stopped him to make him go to sleep and sidetrack him (Arguedas 2000, 54).

It is here that the reader is introduced to Paula Melchora, the prostitute from the Sierra who had settled like many others in Chimbote. This

illustration of the highlander's life in Chimbote is again a reflection of Arguedas' own life, and how he was taken from his pure, unadulterated mountain home and transplanted into the life of the coast (Fernández 2000, 291). Arguedas paints a vivid geographical, cultural, and social picture for the reader in his first chapter as he describes the debilitating situation of the highlander turned coastal dweller. As stated above, Arguedas was at one time forced to leave his home in the Sierra to come to the coast to study and to become what others expected him to become: an acculturated, educated white Peruvian (Caviedes 1987, 59). His distaste for the coastal region as opposed to the Sierra is evident in the first part of the novel, as he compares the sea upon which all of these highlanders are dependent to the sexual organ of a 'great whore':

Before it was a mirror; now it's the million-dollar sex organ  
of the great whore, prostituted by gringoized mobster pimps...  
Great big pimping sharks (the fish meal factory industrialists)  
– they're prostituting Chimbote from the fucking hell  
(Arguedas 2000, 46).

In his own struggle of life and death, Arguedas points to the conflict between elements from the coastal regions and the highland, and to the complex social and geographical distinctions between the two. There was, upon the onset of the anchovy industry, an infiltration of Indians to the coast, a mixing of two cultures that had remained separate and equal in their own rights. The novel focuses on the corruption of and effects on the mountain inhabitants as they infiltrate Chimbote, and their attempt at peaceful co-existence in the city; the possibility of unifying the country of Peru for the first time (Rowe 2000, 294).

The mountains of the Sierra are, in this case, symbolic of purity, hope, and life, based on the author's childhood and his experiences with the Indians of the region. It is a place of purity and innocence, untouched by corruption and the influence of the Western world (Castilla 1999, 1). The Sierra of Peru symbolized for Arguedas a place of peace, a place of pure, unadulterated beauty and a place in which he was truly at home. In one of his diaries, Arguedas even found this beauty of the mountains in a *nionena* (pig) he was petting in San Miguel de Obrajillo as he observes the waterfall:

The high, extremely high waterfall that flows down off the  
unreachable rocky peak was singing in the deep tone of that  
*nionena*, in his stiff bristles, which softened; and the sunshine  
that had heated the stones, my chest, and each leaf on the

trees and bushes, warming with plentitude and beauty even my wife's angular and forceful features – that sun was more present in the nionena's language, in his delicious slumber, than anywhere else. The waterfalls of Peru, like those of San Miguel, where water slides down into abysses hundreds of feet deep, dropping almost perpendicularly and irrigating terraces where food plants flower, will comfort my eyes moments before dying... they exist because of those sheer mountains, capriciously arranged into gorges deep as death and more fiercely alive than ever...(Arguedas 2000, 10-11).

In this passage the meaning of the waterfall may be ambivalent. At times, when Arguedas notes the abysses, the image may be seen in the gothic context. However, the waterfall also encompasses life-giving aspects, as the author paints a picture of it irrigating the terraces, feeding the plants and warming the body. At the conclusion of the passage the reader sees in the waterfall the theology of hope, as it comforts the author's eyes before he dies.

The second chapter of *The Foxes* focuses on the perceived lunatic Moncada and his only friend, Don Esteban de la Cruz a man from the Sierra (Arguedas 2000, 138). Moncada is the 'madman' from the coast who goes about the El Modelo marketplace and the city of Chimbote preaching to whoever may listen. He speaks of the corruption of the city and the corruption of the industry, all the while bearing a large wooden cross. He continuously berates the anchovy fishing industry, the foreigners who give the orders in Chimbote, and the politics surrounding the successes and failures of the town (Arguedas 2000, 57). In the following passage, Moncada laments the proliferation of 'outsiders' or foreigners who have come to Chimbote and who control the industry as well as the inhabitants of the town. The foreigners are the ones who are becoming wealthy at the expense of the *cholos* and *criollos*, by exploiting not only the resources in Chimbote but its inhabitants as well:

Here, in Peru shall we say, since San Martín, Don José, there's been nothing but outsiders, foreigners giving the orders. We've been nothing but the servants of foreigners (Arguedas 2000, 59).

Caviedes confirms this in his assessment of the resentment and fear felt by the people of Chimbote and more specifically, the highlanders who migrated to the coast:

...the exploitation of the resources of the sea from Chimbote had fallen, within the anticipated 'five or ten years' into the hands of foreign profiteers. This is the reason for the strong resentment that exudes from the pages of *The Foxes* each time one of Arguedas's characters refers to the Peruvian capitalists or the foreign speculators (Caviedes 1987, 66).

Esteban de la Cruz is dying from the coal dust deposited in his lungs from years of working as a miner. He is physically weak and fragile, but is accepting of Moncada and believes him to be a wise man who speaks the truth, unlike other coastal inhabitants. Although Moncada is from the coastal region of Peru, he is one of the very few who has seen and recognized the changes that have taken place. He has witnessed the continued demise of the coast and its inhabitants, and has seen the greed, corruption, prostitution, filth and dishonesty that continuously arise in the coast's industry and daily life. What makes him even more different from other coastal or highland residents of Chimbote is that he chooses to speak of these changes and disasters, as well as of his present situation and that of other coastal inhabitants in the poor neighbourhoods owned by the Corporation:

A strip of muddy ground's your home, compadre; my home's the same and so's the home of all us thirty families who live like pestiferous parasites on the body of the Santa Corporation (Arguedas 2000, 147).

Don Esteban seeks help and condolence not only in Moncada but also in his wife's cousin, with whom he visits for some time. He is the one who speaks out about these things, the Santa Corporation in particular, and is the only coastal inhabitant who seems to recognize the pernicious effects on the region, both ecologically and culturally. Don Esteban, although from the Sierra, is also witness to this destruction through Moncada. He lives in the poverty, the filth, and the corruption, and is as much a victim and contributor to it as any other. However, unlike other highlanders who arrive in search of something better, he has not been jaded so much by the prospect of wealth by way of the anchovy, but sees in Moncada the truth of the coast and the purity of the Sierra (Arguedas 2000, 87). Both Don Esteban and Moncada draw upon the wisdom of the great *aukillu*, the omnipotent, omniscient 'Lord', priest, sorcerer who presides over all mountain cult celebrations and rites. According to the *aukillu*, Don Esteban must cough up five ounces of coal from his injured

lungs in order to be saved. His wife's cousin stresses the fact that Don Esteban must follow these orders if he wants to continue to live and to escape the curse of the coast and its disease. It is in the exchange between these two ailing men that Arguedas again refers to the mountain as metaphor: "Aukillu, ancient mountain, grand Lord. He knows" (Arguedas 2000, 168). The comparison drawn here by Arguedas between *aukillu* and an ancient mountain is symbolic of his love and admiration for the mountains of the high Sierra. The 'Lord' is historically seen as an inherently good entity, one full of purity, hope, love, joy, and peace. By comparing this 'Lord' of the Sierra to an ancient mountain, Arguedas is putting into words his very feelings of adoration for the Sierra.

The third chapter of *The Foxes* introduces the reader to Don Angel Rincón Jaramillo, the manager of the Nautilus Fishing Company fishmeal factory, and to a 'stranger', who the reader later comes to know as Don Diego. These characters are central to the illustrations of coastal vices and the control held by the company owners over the general population of highlanders. It becomes even more obvious as the chapter and dialogue progress that the highlander is seen as no better than an animal. There is no moral dilemma when it comes to exploiting those from the Sierra, as they are naïve, uneducated, untrained, and optimistic upon arrival on the coast. The coast is a place of festering, seething, growing filth and corruption, and there is no evidence of conscience in the treatment of the highlander or his inevitable fate. During the dialogue between Don Angel and Don Diego, the reader learns that Don Angel prides himself on the makeup of his workforce, and feels that he has done a service to the highlander by allowing him to be a part of the fish-meal factory, as he implies in the following comment:

...they don't even know how to pronounce the name of their province, some of 'em; others curse their father and mother; they all get drunk as worms, but nevertheless, when they're taught to run machinery, and what's more, when the engineers explain the workings of the most complicated key parts and tell them how the machines function as a whole, these animals learn – rather slowly...there's no agreement amongst them, nor discipline, nor real direction...out of my own pure cussedness and goodness of heart I've trained a workforce (Arguedas 2000, 124).

It is evident throughout the novel that those born and raised on the coast have a certain contempt for the immigrants from the Sierra, and that

they clearly feel that those from ‘up above’ are truly inferior (Caviedes 1987, 70). During the conversation between Don Diego and Don Angel, it becomes clear that Don Angel has no feeling of respect or care for those from the Sierra, and that he feels they deserve no better than they are getting. He feels that he is doing them a favour by employing them in his factory, and implies during the conversation that those from the Sierra should be thankful for what they have been given on the coast. The truth of the matter, however, is that these workers and their families are living in putrescence and extreme poverty, barely surviving by their many hours of hard labour in the factories. There is one *barrio* mentioned by Don Angel that according to Caviedes:

there are even worse places in Chimbote. Until the mid-1970s, for example, there was a swamp south of the city formed by the waters of seasonal creeks from the western slopes of the coastal range and the sewage from the shanties. Left vacant because of the threat of malaria, these unhealthy grounds began to be invaded by squatters who formed the lowest population stratum – late arrivals from the Sierra, those who could not find employment because of physical or mental impediments, single Indian mothers, and criminals (Caviedes 1987, 70).

Don Angel, on the other hand, shares an entirely different perspective regarding these areas with Don Diego:

It’s unbelievable, Diego, my friend. They live better there, that is to say, better than a combination of ducks and mosquitoes would. In there people – cholos and Indians – are livin’; they even have shops, little yards with pigs, guinea pigs, and ducks amidst the deceptive solidity of the clumps of sod on the shores of those very strange quagmires in this desert. There they dance on certain days, get drunk, and even put up Peruvian flags without knowin’ what they stand for...He’s king! On the ocean side of the highway and up on the dunes, too, there are better shantytowns, much better. But these settlements on the marshes, they’re not all that sad, who knows for what mucky reasons. They’re not sad (Arguedas 2000, 134).

It is here, in Don Angel’s words, that the reader clearly sees how the man from the coast perceives the highlander. According to Caviedes:

this dialogue is, indeed, indicative of the coastal inhabitant's perception of those 'from above', whom he considers inferior and deserving no better. In this passage Arguedas points, with a sharp understanding, at the 'social and ethnic differences' that separate *costeros* from *serranos*, and Peruvians in general (Caviedes 1987, 70).

It has been suggested by Caviedes that the social network cited in the novel parallels the actual social situation in contemporary Peru, as it has been for the past five centuries, since the Spaniards conquered the country five hundred years ago. Since then the country has been ruled by a Spanish 'elite' which has continued to strengthen its social, political, and economic mastery. The elite group consists of the racially pure, excluding anyone from any other area of the country or any other race. Moreover, the cultural and ethnic opposition between the coast and the Sierra existed before the Spanish came to rule, thus making the opposition in contemporary Peru even more acute (Caviedes 1987, 70). This theme is central to Arguedas's novel as he repeats it many times over throughout its course.

The second part of the novel consists of only one chapter and is concluded with Arguedas's *Last Diary*. This last official chapter of the novel focuses not on one or two central characters, as Arguedas had done in previous chapters, but pulls together all the characters in one time period. In one exchange between the characters Chaucato and Butterball, Chaucato compares Braschi to a fiery volcano:

...he gave birth to this whole world of Chimbote, and it's true now that monkey mouth he used to have is lookin' like the mouth of a fiery volcano that swallows, swallows, swallows up the shitty banknotes of the world just to screw things up, that's all (Arguedas 2000, 196).

This use of mountains as simile by Arguedas is unusual in the novel, as he primarily uses the image of the mountain as something pleasant and innocuous, not something so violent and volatile as a volcano. However, the image of a volcano here in the context of Braschi is much different from that of his images and metaphors relating to the Sierras of the country. Arguedas's use of the volcano in the above passage is an anomaly in the novel, as in all other references to mountains, Arguedas paints them as being peaceful and pure.

Immediately after the exchange between these characters, the reader is taken back to Maxwell, the ex-Peace Corps volunteer, Don Cecilio Ramirez from the high Andes, and Bazalar, the pig raiser from San Pedro,

who are all waiting for Cardozo at his residence (Arguedas 2000, 204). There is some speculation as to the motivation for Maxwell's character. Caviedes states:

Maxwell appears to be based upon an American anthropology student who had come in contact with the Indians of Titicaca Lake in southern Peru, from whom he learned to play the charrango – a string instrument that uses the shell of an armadillo as a percussion box. Maxwell's inclination to familiarize himself with the Indian folklore and to serve as an interpreter of their music is seen by Arguedas – who had himself been a researcher of the Indian ethnology and folklore since 1947 – as evidence of a commitment to the Indian culture very similar to his own (Caviedes 1987, 66).

It is with these comments by Caviedes that the reader must examine the last section of the novel, as it focuses in large part on Maxwell, and tells the story of how he came to leave the Peace Corps and become a mason's partner, living in the La Esperanza shantytown as did so many others who came to Chimbote from the Sierra. Arguedas points out, in his last chapter, that Maxwell himself is not immune to the temptations and corruptions of the coastal region:

On the first night of his official withdrawal from the Peace Corps, Maxwell set out to walk to the port. ... Consciously, 'stupidly', rather than heading straight for the port, Maxwell swerved off onto the brothel footpath, made by men who had just the right amount of money or were simply going to look. He arrived; he heard the rock and roll music in the enormous pink hall and invited China to dance. Never before had a Peace Corps worker been seen in the brothel (Arguedas 2000, 206).

## Conclusion

Arguedas's *El Zorro de Arriba y El Zorro de Abajo* is an extremely complex and difficult novel, at times even frustratingly so. It is, however, a novel worthy of tremendous consideration - socially, economically, culturally and geographically. As the reader examines the author's life it is evident that his personal experiences had an undying effect on his perceptions of place and space. These perceptions are clearly evident in

his descriptions of the mountain and coastal regions of Peru. To Arguedas the mountains are symbolic of simple good. They represent all that is true, pure, joyful, peaceful and innocent in the world, as well as the hope that so often drives humankind. Arguedas refers to this time and again in the novel, both geographically in his descriptions and in the story line itself. Every mention of the mountains and its population is a celebration. The inhabitants of the coast who came from the mountains did so in search of improvement in their lives. They had hope, and it drove them to seek out and pursue the lives of their dreams. Virtually all references Arguedas makes to the mountains are ones with a positive connotation, and their symbolism becomes even more apparent when compared with references to the coast. The coast is symbolic of filth, corruption, sadness, poverty, greed, desperation and violence. Every mention of coast and its people is an indictment. Arguedas obviously had no love of the coast, although he spent much of his life there and continued to visit Chimbote on numerous occasions throughout his life. His true heart lived in the Sierra with the indigenous people for it was here that he grew up and learned to love the land.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> The original text of Arguedas' novel was published in 1971 but is not generally available. In 2000 Fred Fornoff wrote an English language translation of the novel with the title *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*. The quotations presented in this paper are drawn from the translated work.

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