

**The Paradox of *indigenismo*: Literary Heterogeneity  
in Jorge Icaza's *Huasipungo* (1934) and José María  
Arguedas's *Los ríos profundos* (1958)**

Mariam Sarah Ramazan Mahalli

300261528

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Supervisor: Miguel Arnedo-Gómez

**Abstract**

This paper examines two novels, *Huasipungo* (1934) by Ecuadorian author Jorge Icaza and *Los ríos profundos* (1958) by Peruvian author José María Arguedas. These novels pertain to the *indigenista* literary current, in which authors from white, middle-class sectors of society wrote about Latin American indigenous peoples. As a movement, literary *indigenismo* is seen to last from the 1920s to the 1960s, but was particularly active during the 1920s and 1930s in Latin American nations with large indigenous populations, such as Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. *Indigenista* narratives (novels and short stories) were praised by some commentators for their 'authenticity' in the portrayal of indigenous Latin Americans, whereas others condemned them as 'inauthentic' representations, written by white middle-class outsiders. Peruvian critic Antonio Cornejo Polar believed that it was counterproductive to critique *indigenista* literature in terms of this dichotomy. He argued that the socio-cultural factors involved in the production and consumption of this literature were more complex and developed the concept of literary heterogeneity and a theory around it in order to lay the basis for more sophisticated analyses of *indigenista* literary forms that could account for their dual socio-cultural nature. This dissertation constitutes the first critical endeavour to adapt Cornejo Polar's concept of literary heterogeneity to these two particular *indigenista* novels, with the objective of carrying out a more thorough analysis of their literary characteristics and their socio-cultural implications.

## Introduction

The arrival of the Spanish in the New World in 1492, and their encounter with its native peoples, societies, cultures and civilisations, marked the beginning of a bifurcation, the repercussions of which still resonate throughout the societies that make up the socio-cultural region known as Latin America. The dual socio-cultural nature of Latin American societies impacts in many ways upon the lives of people who pertain to either of the two spheres: the dominant Spanish/Western sphere or the indigenous sphere. Post-independence, the field of literature began to reflect such duality, as the budding nations set about forming their own national literatures. In the 1920s and 1930s, politics and literature came together in a movement known as *indigenismo*. As a literary movement, it produced many novels and short stories that portrayed indigenous issues and denounced the exploitation of Indian communities at the hands of members of the dominant society (Standish 1997: 440, Coronado 2009: 5). *Indigenista* writers were not themselves indigenous but members of the hegemonic, westernised sphere (Rama 2012: 96). For this reason, *indigenista* literature became a significant source of critical debates throughout the continent. On the one hand, novels were praised for their authentic portrayal of the indigenous world from within, on the other, they were criticised for their exteriority (Cornejo Polar 1980: 64, 90fn9).

For Antonio Cornejo Polar, it is counterproductive to critique *indigenista* literature in terms of such a dichotomy. In his influential 1980 study, *Literatura y sociedad en el Perú: La novela indigenista*, he argues that the socio-cultural factors involved in the production and consumption of this literature were more complex and developed the concept of literary heterogeneity and a theory around it in order to lay the basis for more sophisticated analyses of *indigenista* literary forms that could account for their dual socio-cultural nature. In this dissertation, I will adapt Cornejo

Polar's concept to two *indigenista* novels, *Huasipungo* (1934) by Ecuadorian writer, Jorge Icaza and *Los ríos profundos* (1958) by Peruvian writer, José María Arguedas, in order to provide a thorough analysis of their literary characteristics and socio-cultural implications. By studying *indigenista* texts through this lens, it is possible to avoid the polarising criticisms that have dominated the *indigenismo* movement and engage with them in a way that allows for a deeper understanding of their connections with the heterogeneous Latin American societies in which they are produced.

The first section of this dissertation contextualises the emergence of literary *indigenismo*, paying attention to the cultural, political and social developments that it responded to. The second section establishes the critical and theoretical framework, focusing on Cornejo Polar's concept of heterogeneous literatures. In section three I adapt Cornejo Polar's concept to *Huasipungo*, examining the four elements of its production process. Section four focuses on the analysis of three heterogeneous aspects of *Los ríos profundos*: the author, narrative perspective and the novel's *mestizo* referent, Ernesto. I conclude by summarizing the main findings of the discussion and offering suggestions for future study.

### **The Rise of *Indigenismo***

*Indigenismo* was a political and cultural movement that emerged in Latin American countries with large indigenous populations, including the Andean countries Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, and the Central American countries Mexico and Guatemala (Standish 1997: 440).<sup>1</sup> Although the movement's roots can be traced back to the

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<sup>1</sup> This dissertation focuses on *indigenismo* in the Andean region, which starts in the Colombian highlands, includes Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, part of Venezuela and ends in northern Argentina (Rama 2012: 85). Although many critics and much of the criticism referred to in this dissertation discuss

colonial period, *indigenista* scholarly and literary production was most prolific in the first decades of the twentieth century (Coronado 2009: 6). *Indigenismo* privileged 'the portrayal of the status, identity and culture of indigenous peoples' in many forms of artistic expression, including poetry, painting and music (Standish 1997: 440). However, in the field of literature, particularly within the novel genre, *indigenismo* took on a more active social role (Cornejo Polar 1984: 59). *Indigenista* novels set out to vindicate Latin American indigenous peoples, adopting a critical stance towards the dominant Spanish culture and denouncing the exploitation of native Latin Americans (Coronado 2009: 5-6). *Indigenista* writers not only expressed the plight of indigenous communities thematically in their fiction, their denunciations also constituted a call to action, to seek out solutions to the issues they were identifying (Mozejko 2013: 43). Martin Lienhard draws attention to this characteristic with reference to José María Arguedas's essays on Andean culture, arguing that 'estos ensayos se singularizan por el esfuerzo que realiza su autor para convencer a sus lectores, invitarlos a compartir sus convicciones y a actuar en consecuencia' (cited in Mozejko 2013: 44). This literature was, therefore, the medium for a wider social movement, aspiring to induce a change in behaviours and attitudes toward indigenous people.

In addition to narrative fiction, critical essays and other scholarly texts on *indigenismo* and indigenous issues also proliferated. These texts examined the 'indigenous question' from a more scientific perspective than that presented in novels and short stories (Coronado 2009: 7). It is important to note that *indigenista* literature is written by learned writers from the white and *mestizo* lower-middle-class sectors of society, not by indigenous people themselves (Rama 2012: 96). These *indigenista*

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*indigenismo* in Peru, Lambricht confirms that 'literary and artistic concern with the role of the Indian in national discourse is a Latin American phenomenon' (Lambricht 2007: 17).

writers tended to come from the provincial areas of their nations and had been part of a massive migration of people who sought education, economic and social opportunities in the urban centres (Cornejo Polar 1984: 16, Coronado 2009: 9).

The factors that led to the emergence of this movement are inextricably connected to the non-indigenous members of the lower middle class who were its driving force. In the 1920s, an artistic awakening took place in Latin America. Intellectuals and artists turned away from Europe and began to appreciate their own cultures, looking toward the Indian, the black man and nature as sources of inspiration (Maldonado López 1996: 45). *Lo nativo* was viewed as a unique aspect of Latin American countries, that could contribute to the forging of national identities not only in artistic expression but also as a source of scientific and ideological reflection that Jean Franco calls 'nacionalismo cultural' (cited in Cornejo Polar 1984: 16). *Indigenismo* therefore played a fundamental role in the development of cultural identity in Latin American nations, in addition to a more political role in the region's nation-building projects. In the case of Peru, the need for this type of national unification became evident after the loss of the War of the Pacific against Chile (1879-83). Coronado argues that this loss evidenced Peru's insufficient military and political organisation and a backwardness that stemmed from oligarchic rule. In view of this situation, intellectuals, such as Peruvian essayist Manuel Gonzalez Prada, insisted on the importance of modernisation (Coronado 2008: 56). Furthermore, these intellectuals were concerned with the role of the Indian in the modernisation process, believing that it was necessary to include indigenous peoples in their nations' intellectual, cultural and political life (Lambright 2007: 17). Coronado locates *indigenismo's* origins within González Prada's 1888 'Discurso en el Politeama', in which the essayist incites redress for the exploitation of indigenous peoples and

petitions for nation building by way of extension of citizenship to all Peruvian subjects. In response to this need for unification, the first few decades of the twentieth century, constituted a period of efforts to rebuild the nation and national pride in Peru (Coronado 2008: 57; 2009: 6).

The beginning of the twentieth century was a time of growth and development in many Latin American societies. As Cornejo Polar explains, this led to several factors that contributed to the conflicts *indigenismo* centres on. The modernisation and consolidation of capitalist structures, the rise of North American imperialism and the growing radicalisation of the working and middle classes intensified antagonism between the Indian peasantry and the great landowners that dominated them, particularly in the provinces, where feudalism persisted (Cornejo Polar 1984: 17-18). As Coronado explains, Andean indigenous communities were active participants in this conflict, organising themselves as political actors to demand their rights and taking part in uprisings, particularly in Peru and Bolivia. These revolts were met with violent repression (Coronado 2009: 10-11). Such clashes between indigenous communities and landowners constitute the thematic focus of most *indigenista* novels (Mozejko 2012: 36-37, Maldonado 1996: 48).

Uruguayan critic, Angel Rama, also attributes the emergence of *indigenismo* to social and ideological factors linked to modernisation. For Rama, *indigenismo* in the Andean cultural area flourished as a result of a 'new social group', which had emerged in provincial towns and cities. This group, which was made up of lower-middle-class members of Spanish, *criollo* and *mestizo* society, developed as a result of improved education and increasing demands for a better qualified and more extensive

workforce; aspects of the modernisation process taking place in the region.<sup>2</sup> According to Rama, this new social group turned to *indigenismo* because the rigidity of the Andean cultural area was a deep-rooted obstacle to their progress. This rigidity lies within the indigenous cultures' resistance to both destruction and assimilation into the dominant Spanish culture and the semi-feudal economy's resistance to modernisation, which kept the old social structures and wealthy landowners firmly in place. The dominant Hispanic culture imposed itself upon the mostly indigenous class of rural workers, which Rama argues perpetuated a Hegelian master/slave dialectic, repressing creativity and progress in the entire area. Thus, members of the rising lower middle classes took up the indigenous plight as their own, speaking up for the Indian, using literature and art as vehicles for their message of social and political protest. Rama attributes this to the Marxist idea that groups that gain mobility extend their demands to include all other oppressed groups (Rama 2012: 87-97).<sup>3</sup>

Similarly to Rama, José Carlos Mariátegui locates the socio-political origins of *indigenismo* in the land tenure system and its entrenched feudalism, which privileged the *gamonales* and left the Indian with no legal protection (Mariátegui 1955: 27-28). However, the two critics disagree as to the motivations of *indigenista* writers. Rama has no doubt that, whilst the *indigenistas* would have felt solidarity with the exploited indigenous communities, they used this group as a cover for their own agenda because the injustices faced by Indians were much more serious and numerous than

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<sup>2</sup> Cueva discusses a similar process in Ecuador after the Liberal Revolution in 1895: a new secular and popular education system led to the creation of a politically emancipated middle class, who, upon completing their education, discovered that the political democratization of the country was not matched by economic democratization. The dead end for their aspirations fostered an attitude of protest among this politically empowered group (Cueva 1968: 7-8).

<sup>3</sup> Coronado also discusses the importance of Marxist political and cultural criticism to the *indigenista* movement, arguing that it lays the basis for the defence of the Indian as an integral component of a classed society (Coronado 2009: 7)



their own. For Rama, *indigenistas* saw the advantage of the assimilation of indigenous grievances as an effective way to realise their own projects (Rama 2012: 98). Mariátegui, on the other hand, defends the *indigenistas* against such accusations of opportunism. He insists that *indigenismo* was strongly connected to the socialist ideology of the rising lower middle classes. According to Mariátegui, socialism orders and defines the demands of the masses and the working classes and, because in Peru in 1928 those masses were eighty percent indigenous, socialism had to align itself with the indigenous cause (cited in Cornejo Polar 1984: 20).<sup>4</sup>

### **Antonio Cornejo Polar's Concept of Heterogeneous Literatures**

*Indigenista* literature was subject to a wide variety of criticism. At one end of the spectrum, Cornejo Polar observes a 'utopia' of *indigenismo*. This 'utopia', widely accepted among literary critics, developed around the belief that this literature was an internal testimony of the indigenous world (Cornejo Polar 1980: 64). In fact, Cornejo Polar argues that the *indigenista* novel itself has tried to efface its condition of exteriority, imagining itself as what it cannot be: indigenous literature. He sees an attempt to present a perspective from within in Ciro Alegria's 1935 novel *La serpiente de oro*, in which the author aims for interiority by writing mostly from an Indian, first person narrative voice (Cornejo Polar 1979: 62-63).

*Huasipungo* was an immensely successful novel. It was awarded the first Premio de la Novela Hispanoamericana in Buenos Aires in 1935 (Maldonado 1996:

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<sup>4</sup> Coronado points out that there are contested figures on indigenous populations, with inaccurate census procedures making it difficult to give exact figures. Thomas Davies reports that forty percent of Peru's 1940 population was indigenous, Coronado himself estimates that the percentage would have been somewhere between Mariátegui's and Davies's figures (Coronado 2009: 10, Davies, as cited in Coronado 2009: 10).

54). In addition to this, Cueva notes 20 editions in Spanish including print-runs of up to 50,000 copies, translations in 16 languages, 3 children's adaptations and several for the theatre, as well as its inclusion in the *Diccionario de la Literatura Universal Laffont-Bompiani* of 1934 (1978: 24fn2).<sup>5</sup> However, like many *indigenista* novels, it was also strongly condemned. Despite the fact that it raised public awareness of the abusive treatment of the Indians, the novel was accused of depicting them in an unpleasant and offensive way (Standish 1997: 441). Maldonado argues that *indigenista* writers, despite their praiseworthy intent to defend Indians, merely reinforced many prejudices about them (Maldonado 1996: 60). Mario Vargas Llosa is perhaps *indigenismo's* harshest critic. He considered the work of early *indigenista* Enrique López Albújar to portray a partial, distorted and negative image of the Indian people (cited in Cornejo Polar 1980: 67, 50).<sup>6</sup> In a particularly scathing comment, Vargas Llosa argued that *indigenistas* were as barbarous as the conquistadors (cited in Maldonado 1996: 51). Whilst Vargas Llosa's position may be somewhat unfair considering the *indigenista* desire to ameliorate the situation for indigenous communities, many other critics have also found *indigenista* novels to be flawed. One criticism is that *indigenista* writers, in their attempt to speak for the Indians, have often written patronising texts that exoticise and idealise the Indian, matching the exoticism and romanticism of a previous Latin American movement of indigenous revalorisation:

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<sup>5</sup> Rama sustains that such success was the result of a strengthening *mestizo* culture that was able to absorb other middle class social groups into its universe of values (Rama 2012: 100).

<sup>6</sup> There are contrasting views in criticism regarding López Albújar's representation of Indians. Cornejo Polar observes that in his 1920 work, *Cuentos Andinos*, despite portraying Indians with a certain degree of violence and primitivism, he also depicts them as 'un ser viviente', capable of acting for themselves and not just reacting in a Pavlovian way (1980: 49-51). Tomás G. Escajadillo believes that it is with this work that *indigenismo* truly begins and Ciro Alegria concurs that López Albújar was the first writer to create indigenous characters 'de carne y hueso' (cited in Cornejo Polar 1984: 49). However, Rowe sustains that the Indians are presented as perverse and cruel by López Albújar, a provincial judge with knowledge of the Indians. According to Rowe, the writer feigns an unbiased opinion of the Indians and yet presents a psychological explanation for their behaviour, assuming a view from within of the Indian, which is merely a rationalization of racial prejudice (Rowe 1997: xii).

*Indianismo* (Standish 1997: 441). José Angel Escalante argued that no writer had the 'right' to write about Indian reality (cited in Cornejo Polar 1998: 23). Finally, Catherine Saintoul considered it a type of racism to consider oneself able to speak for and write on behalf of a society about which one was almost completely ignorant (cited in Maldonado 1996: 59).

Both the above critical tendencies rely on the binary criterion of interiority/exteriority. As Cornejo Polar explains, the Peruvian critic, José Carlos Mariátegui, had already undermined the validity of this binary distinction for understanding the *indigenista* novel when he wrote:

Y la mayor injusticia en que podría incurrir un crítico, sería cualquier apresurada condena de la literatura indigenista por su falta de autoctonismo integral o la presencia, más o menos acusada en sus obras, de elementos de artificio en la interpretación y en la expresión. La literatura indigenista no puede darnos una versión rigurosamente verista del indio. Tiene que idealizarlo y estilizarlo. Tampoco puede darnos su propia ánima. Es todavía una literatura de mestizos. Por eso se llama indigenista y no indígena. (1955: 252)

Cornejo Polar argues on the basis of Mariátegui's statement that the external perspective of *indigenista* writers is the sine qua non of the *indigenista* novel. More specifically, he uses Mariátegui's distinction between indigenous and *indigenista* literature to argue that a fundamental feature of the novel is the heterogeneity of the elements that intervene in its process of production and distribution and the fact that it is inscribed into a conflictual and unequal socio-cultural space (Cornejo Polar 1984: 3).

In addition to this, Cornejo Polar notes the importance of Mariátegui's discussion of Peruvian literature as non-organically national and his proposal of the creation of a critical system which accounts for this peculiarity. Mariátegui states:

El dualismo quechua-español no resuelto aún, hace de la literatura nacional un caso de excepción que no es posible estudiar con el método válido para las literaturas orgánicamente nacionales, nacidas y crecidas sin la intervención de una conquista (1955: 175)

Mariátegui's comment points to the fact that *indigenista* literature moves across socio-cultural groups; it is produced by predominantly white, middle class sectors of Latin American societies but seeks to portray issues that pertain to the indigenous world. For Cornejo Polar, societal factors are an essential component of this literature. Establishing the relationship between texts, their literary system and the societies in which they are produced is an integral part of his project, through which he endeavours to understand literature as a social fact (D'Allemand 2000: 128).

In addition to societal factors, there are cultural factors that must be taken into account. Cornejo Polar argues that an important aspect to be aware of in understanding *indigenista* literature is the fact that it exists because Peru (and also neighbouring Andean countries) contains two strong cultural poles: the hegemonic Spanish/Western pole and the subordinate indigenous pole, which impact upon each other without ever fusing into one. The cultural complexity lies in the fact that whilst the Western culture is dominant, it has never fully assimilated the indigenous culture. Not only is *indigenista* literature situated at the conflictual crossing of these two cultures, this duality is a basic presupposition to its existence (1980: 4-8). According to Cornejo Polar, cultural heterogeneity is what defines *indigenista* literary production. It produces tensions which are more acute than those produced by social heterogeneity because within the latter there are certain common interests to be found. The procedures, forms and values that *indigenismo* uses in order to inform about indigenous communities do not stem from Indian culture but from the Western literary system, based on a Christian worldview. The magical-religious order that Quechua

culture is based on clashes directly with Western rationalism. There does not seem to be a margin of reconciliation between these two cultures, which Arguedas remarks is evident in the persistence of the Quechua universe as an autonomous system (Cornejo Polar 1980: 22-25, Arguedas, as cited in Cornejo Polar 1980: 25).

Cornejo Polar explains that literary *indigenismo* is a paradoxical form of writing on account of the novel's links to the bourgeoisie and its privileged space, the city. In this way, it is distanced from its referent, who belong to the rural space where oral tradition is the preferred form of artistic expression and communication (Cornejo Polar 1980: 59-60). D'Allemand points out that for Cornejo Polar the only way to critique Latin American literature is through a conceptual framework that takes into account the socio-cultural plurality of the region and discourses in which 'las dinámicas de los entrecruzamientos múltiples *no* [sic] operan en función sincrética sino, al revés, enfatizan conflictos y alteridades' (Cornejo Polar, as cited in D'Allemand 2000: 125). In order to elucidate the meaning of *indigenismo*, Cornejo Polar assumed Mariátegui's proposal for a particular critical apparatus for literature of this nature and advanced his concept of heterogeneous literatures.

The concept of heterogeneous literatures is based on Cornejo Polar's outline of what he terms the four elements of the process of production of the *indigenista* novel. Those elements are: the author (and his system of values and conventions), the resulting text (the *indigenista* literary work), the referent (the subject of the novel) and the circuit of communication (the reader). The defining aspect of this concept is the fact that within the production system of these literatures one or more of these elements corresponds to a socio-cultural system which is different from that which the other elements belong to. Cornejo Polar argues that to appreciate *indigenista* literature we must apply this concept, determining and examining the elements that constitute

its production system. A number of studies have been undertaken on certain heterogeneous literary forms. Some of these are, Agustín Cueva's study of *Cien años de soledad* by Gabriel García Márquez, Noé Jitrik's work on Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*, and Ángel Rama's writings on the narrative of José María Arguedas. These heterogeneous literatures are characterized by a duality or plurality of socio-cultural configurations within their production processes, because of which a zone of conflict is created. The significance of this theoretical framework is that it allows for a re-interpretation of a literature that had previously only been examined through an ethnocentric lens that took Western literary forms as universal aesthetic models (D'Allemand 2000: 130).

Cornejo Polar reached several conclusions for each of the elements of production of literary *indigenismo*. The author and his system of values and conventions belong to the westernised socio-cultural order which prevailed in the urban centres located along the Peruvian coast. The resulting text, a novel, is even further removed from the indigenous universe, as it is a literary genre of Western origins. In terms of the circuit of communication, the Indian is marginalised as the novel is written in Spanish for an urban, middle-class reader, essentially belonging to the same group as the author. Finally, the referent of the *indigenista* novel is the Indian, who does not belong to the same westernised socio-cultural sphere and thus creates the heterogeneity. The referent undergoes a narrative processing that is alien to his/her own culture and therefore he/she is subject to a distorting external interpretation. The rift that separates the indigenous universe from *indigenista* expression is profound and implies a distance between different cultural systems and two social orders that frequently come into conflict (Cornejo Polar 1980: 64-67).

One final point worth raising here, before exploring it in more detail in the following sections, is the referent's impact upon *indigenista* texts, which can be significant enough to alter the formal texture of the novel (D'Allemand 2000: 144). Cornejo Polar recognised that the indigenous referent demands certain conditions, compelling the writer to modify particular aspects of the text in order to portray the referent's universe. He argues that these modifications not only explain the peculiarities of this literature but also show how the *indigenista* novel opens itself up to the requirements of the indigenous world. This is something that allows *indigenista* writers to assimilate the interests of a class they do not belong to and demand the recognition of the values of a culture that is not theirs (1980: 67-71). The importance of literary form is an integral aspect of Cornejo Polar's theorising on heterogeneous literatures. Prioritising the referent's impact upon the novel opens up the possibility for 'a re-reading of the role of the dominated sectors of the population in [the] production of texts, such as their capacity to articulate counter-hegemonic responses, to modify elements originating from the dominant culture, and even penetrate it with their own cultural forms' (D'Allemand 2000: 144). This relates to a point Cornejo Polar makes in his last work of criticism, *Escribir en el aire* (1994), which is that the processes that underpin heterogeneous literatures essentially produce distinctively Latin American forms of expression (Cornejo Polar 2013: 5).

### **Heterogeneity in Jorge Icaza's *Huasiungo* (1934)**

There can be no doubt as to Jorge Icaza's talent as an *indigenista* novelist. Literary critic Agustín Cueva identifies him as Ecuador's most noteworthy twentieth century writer (1978: 23). Other critics also cite him as one of Ecuador's most prominent

*indigenista* authors (Lambright 2007: 17, González-Pérez 1988: 1, Francisco Ferrándiz, as cited in Maldonado López 1996: 54). Icaza belongs to the 'generación del 30', a group of leftist Ecuadorian writers, who were close to the popular sectors, and who 'vivieron, sintieron, plantearon y denunciaron los graves problemas del país' (Cueva 1968: 9-10). As Rama explains, Icaza's work pertains to the genre known as social realism but is even more overtly denunciatory (2012: 13). Although it is clear in their writing that *indigenista* writers took issue with the treatment of the Indian and were calling for change, Rama notes that their worldview, visible in the narrative tone of the novels, was not Indian. He adds that these writers were largely ignorant of indigenous culture, believing it to be non-existent or inferior and therefore only drew from Western sources (2012: 96-99).

Kathleen N. March's account of Icaza's life helps to elucidate his Western worldview. He was born in 1906 in Quito, where he spent most of his life. He studied medicine at the Central University of Quito, although the deaths of his parents meant he was unable to complete his studies. Icaza took up a variety of occupations such as civil servant, actor, playwright and proprietor of a bookshop. Whilst his plays had limited success, Icaza made his name with short stories and novels, of which *Huasi-pungo* is the most widely acclaimed. Co-founder of the Ecuadorian Syndicate of Artists and Writers and winner of the 1936 National Prize for Literature, Icaza was a prominent member of the Latin American literary establishment. Particularly relevant to the focus of this study is the time he spent on his uncle's hacienda in Riobamba, in the Ecuadorian *sierra*, to which he ascribes his inspiration for *Huasi-pungo* (1997: 434-435). He also toured Ecuador in 1929 with the Compañía Dramática Nacional, performing one of his own plays (Cueva 1968: 59). During this time Icaza would have gained some insight into indigenous life and the plight of the Indians. Cornejo Polar's



theorising suggests that such contact between the mostly provincial *indigenistas* and indigenous communities would have had an impact upon their writing. Although they were writing from urban centres and the struggles of the *campesinos* were not a part of their daily lives, *indigenistas*' early experiences allowed them to identify closely with rural issues. Such shifts between rural and urban spaces, as well as across distinct social conflicts and political ideologies further enhance the heterogeneity of these novels (Cornejo Polar 1980: 16, 19). D'Allemand argues that although the indigenous world is different from the world of the *indigenista* writers who seek to depict it, it is not impenetrable and suggests that these writers incorporated some indigenous formal elements on the basis of their prior knowledge of indigenous cultures (D'Allemand 2001: 144-145).

*Huasipungo* takes place on the Cuchitambo hacienda, in the Ecuadorian *sierra*, which belongs to *latifundista* Alfonso Pereira. Finding himself in financial difficulties Pereira signs an agreement with an American company who seeks to construct a road through his hacienda in order to exploit petrol resources. Pereira forces the Indians, who work his lands and live on them in their meagre *huasipungos*,<sup>7</sup> to build the road under inhumane conditions, after which he dispossesses them entirely. The novel depicts the desperation of the Indians through the fate of *huasipunguero*, Andrés Chiliquinga. Over the course of the novel Andrés acquires a limp due to overwork in the forests. He is also fined for damaging crops. Furthermore, his partner and mother of his child, Cunshi, is raped by Pereira and later dies after the family eat rotten meat to avoid starvation. When he is informed of their dispossession, Andrés leads the community to revolt but they are violently quashed by the brute force of the army,

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<sup>7</sup> Quechua word for a small plot of land and little shack that the Indian received from the landowner in exchange for labour (Corrales Pascual 1974: 23)

called in by Pereira, who decides that this is an issue that 'se liquida sólo a bala' (Icaza 1960: 177).<sup>8</sup>

Franco identifies the principal theme in *Huasipungo*, recurring in almost all *indigenista* literature, as the capitalistic exploitation of man by man (1967: 166). She posits that the particular focus in this novel is the landowner's expulsion of the already ill-treated Indians and his intention to turn them into an exploitable labour force. This is common in *indigenista* novels and is a reflection of the influence of essayists and thinkers' comments on social justice and the proletarianisation of the Indian (Franco 1967: 255).<sup>9</sup> According to Corrales Pascual, this theme, and the obvious misery that it entails for the Indians, resonates not only in the 'grandes líneas de estructura' of the novel but also in its smallest stylistic details (Corrales Pascual 1974: 21). As evidence, he quotes the following passage:

Andrés se limpió con las manos el sudor que le empapaba la cara. Luego miró en su torno con recelo de vencido. ¿Qué podía salvarle? Arriba, el cielo pardo, pesado e indiferente. Abajo, el lodo gredoso, sembrándole más y más en la tierra. Agobiados como bestias los leñadores en su torno. Al fondo, el húmedo chaparral traicionero. Y encadenándolo todo el ojo del capataz.  
(46)

For Corrales Pascual, the detail of this short excerpt is a synthesis of the tragedy of the entire novel. One gets a very strong sense of the futility of the Indian, not only before the relentless eye of the foreman but also before the threat imposed by nature (Corrales Pascual 1974: 21-22). In these lines, and throughout the novel, Icaza creates a sense of the harshness of the conditions that the Indians are subject to. In

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<sup>8</sup> All subsequent quotations from *Huasipungo* are taken from this 1960 edition of the novel and will be cited by page number only.

<sup>9</sup> For Rama, such use of economic factors to drive narrative action in *Huasipungo* (as well as in many other *indigenista* novels) reveals an impoverished view of human beings and an elementary and mechanistic perspective on reality (Rama 2012: 103-104). Concomitantly, Rowe discusses the way in which *indigenista* novels simplify the indigenous situation and misrepresent Indian consciousness by aligning their plight with that of other sectors of society who also desired social change and an end to feudalism (Rowe 1997: xiii).

this way, the author faithfully represents the inhumane and barbaric exploitation of the Indian in Ecuador at the time, which Cueva observes was exceptionally visible during the transition from feudalism to capitalism (Cueva 1978: 26-27).

Icaza uses dehumanising animal imagery to portray the Indians, their behaviour and living conditions. In their first appearance they are depicted as beasts of burden when Pereira and his family arrive at the hacienda, having fled the capital to conceal their disgraced daughter's pregnancy to a *cholo*<sup>10</sup> (Gonzalez-Pérez 1988: 3). Their horses refuse to advance through a mud flat and the Indian guides, who know the hacienda better than their *patrón*, offer to carry the family across on their backs: 'Los indios nombrados por el amo prestaron humildemente sus espaldas para que los miembros de la familia Pereira pasen [sic] de las bestias a ellos' (15). Franco observes that there is not one part of the Indian world that Icaza does not treat with repulsion, from the village on the hacienda with its 'acequia de agua turbia...donde los cerdos hacen camas de lodo...donde los niños se ponen en cuatro para beber, donde se orinan los borrachos' (19), to the limited conversation of the Indians which is full of grunts and exclamations (1967: 166). Animal-like behaviour is particularly evident in an aggressive sexual encounter between Andrés and 'su víctima', Cunshi: 'De un salto felino él se apoderó de la longa por los cabellos. Ella soltó la leña que había recogido y se acurrucó bajo unos cabuyos como gallina que espera al gallo' (25). Such examples of 'lenguaje procaz' are typical of the entire novel and are the target of much criticism (Maldonado 1996: 54). Catherine Saintoul identifies the paradox that such 'bestialización' creates in *Huasipungo*, stating that Icaza, 'creyendo denunciar la agresión racista, abonó el terreno de un racismo de nuevo cuño, disfrazado ahora de

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<sup>10</sup> A person of mixed race: half Indian, half white (Icaza 1960: 188).

“realismo”, de “objetividad” (cited in Maldonado 1996: 60). For González-Pérez this is part of the author’s technique to present the shocking and dramatic, which angers readers but at the same time alienates them from Andrés and the other Indians (1988: 4, 9). Franco concurs that through his dehumanizing language Icaza ‘attempts honest reporting’ of the exploitation of the Indians but lacks artistic coherence and only succeeds in distancing the reader from the Indian, who is represented as ‘an exotic creature held up as an example of the oddness of primitive behaviour’ (1967: 173, 167). It could be argued that the use of such language reveals an underlying racism that clashes with the novel’s objective of defending the Indian. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that Icaza’s problematic descriptions are, to a certain extent, a natural product of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Latin American zeitgeist. At this time, the ideology of the dominant sectors was strongly influenced by scientific racism, which deemed blacks and Indians to be inferior and mixed bloods to be degenerate (Wade 1997: 31). Icaza portrays the Western view of Indian inferiority through the *latifundista* Pereira who, after raping Cunshi states ‘son unas bestias. No le hacen gozar a uno como es debido. Se quedan como vacas. Está visto...Es una raza inferior’ (59). Whilst denouncing such behaviour and advocating an end to this type of exploitation, Icaza was clearly influenced by notions of racial superiority that were entrenched in the dominant culture. Maldonado notes this ‘prejuicio literario’ and alludes to its predominance in *indigenista* novels when he asks ‘¿Cuántas novelas exaltaron nuestra indignación ante las atrocidades cometidas por el terrateniente, el patrón, hacia la comunidad indígena y, de paso, reforzaron múltiples prejuicios obtenidos “arduamente” en la vida cotidiana?’ (Maldonado 1996: 60).

The referent in *Huasipungo* is an indigenous Andean community of the Ecuadorian *sierra*. Becker explains that Andean Indians are grouped under the global

category of 'Kichwa', which is part of the larger ethnolinguistic Quechua group. However, there are distinct regional divisions, and identities remains largely local (Becker 2011: 4). But all of these Andean cultures have in common a rich corpus of oral narratives, such as myths, tales and legends, and these contrast starkly with the Western literary genre of the novel (Cornejo Polar 1980: 59-60). However, closer examination of *Huasipungo*, on the basis of Cornejo Polar's work, reveals ways in which Icaza is compelled to cede certain Western literary conventions in order to portray his indigenous referent.

Cornejo Polar outlines several examples of the referent's impact upon the Peruvian *indigenista* novel that are very similar to the ones taking place in *Huasipungo*. Firstly, the *indigenista* novel often abandons the novelistic convention of a strong, individual protagonist and instead deploys characters who stand for the whole Indian community (Cornejo Polar 1980: 69). This is certainly the case in *Huasipungo*, in which the 'pueblo indio' is the real protagonist and the main character, Andrés, is merely a symbolic hero (Cueva 1968: 24). In the novel, the Indians move almost entirely *en masse* with the exception of Andrés, whose fate represents that of the entire community (Franco 1973: 120). González-Pérez criticizes Icaza for not developing Andrés's character further (1988: 8). However, Cornejo Polar argues that 'los personajes, en especial los protagonistas, expanden su significación muy por encima del ámbito que les correspondería como individuos', in which case it would seem appropriate that the character of Andrés is not excessively individualised (1980: 69).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note here the controversial autobiography *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983), co-written by Elisabeth Burgos, for which Burgos interviewed Menchú, an indigenous Guatemalan, in order to write her story. Controversy arose years later with the publication of another book by American anthropologist, David Stoll, which questions the veracity of the horrors that Menchú had claimed took place involving her family. However, Burgos argues: 'No puede decirse que Rigoberta miente. Es una persona que pertenece a otra tradición cultural, a una tradición preliteraria, de oralidad, en que la historia tiene un carácter colectivo, los hechos se almacenan en esa memoria común y pertenecen a la comunidad' (Burgos, as cited in Martí 1999). Similarly, Rowe refers to the 'non-individuated world-view of the Indian' suggested in one of Arguedas's short stories, 'Agua'

Another way in which the referent can be seen to impact upon *Huasipungo* is by affecting its narrative structure. *Huasipungo* is an episodic novel, divided into twenty-five short episodes, which are not separated by chapters, sections or any other indication of narrative progress but, as Corrales Pascual explains, are 'reconocibles solamente por la disposición tipográfica del texto' (Corrales Pascual 1974: 25). Cornejo Polar observes this type of episodic narrative model in other *indigenista* novels (for example, the early work of Ciro Alegria) and defends it against the criticism that it is a structural defect that causes internal disorder within the novel. He argues that it derives from a highly developed form of indigenous literature, the oral short story. For Cornejo Polar, such heterogeneity within the literature reflects the socio-cultural crossing that defines *indigenismo* as well as the movement's opening to the requirements of the reality it aspires to portray (Cornejo Polar 1980: 71-72).

Perhaps the most obvious impact on *Huasipungo* from the indigenous world is of a linguistic nature. Throughout the novel Icaza uses words from the Quechua language spoken by the Ecuadorian Indians in the *sierra*. In addition to that, he attempts to phonetically transcribe their spoken Spanish (Corrales Pascual 1974: 61). Thus the text is permeated with Quechua words such as 'arí', meaning 'yes' and 'taita' meaning 'father', as well as phrases such as '¿Querendu doler barriga está?' (144). There is even one instance in which Pereira's wife uses the Quechua word 'guagua', referring to her daughter's illegitimate child (60). This reflects the impact of indigenous culture on westernized sectors of Ecuadorian society.<sup>12</sup> In order to ensure the non-

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(Rowe 1997: xvii). This indigenous sense of the community as one arguably has an impact on *indigenista* literature and the choice of writers to represent entire communities through a symbolic protagonist.

<sup>12</sup> What Cornejo Polar terms the impact of the referent can also be conceived through the notion of transculturation. The term transculturation was coined in 1940, by the Cuban writer Fernando Ortiz, to replace the term acculturation, used to explain the process of a dominated group passively acquiring the culture of the group that dominates it (D'Allemand 2000: 49). Angel Rama based much of his work on processes of transculturation and transcultural narrative. Like Ortiz, he opines that it is a more

indigenous reader can understand the text, the author includes a glossary with Spanish translations of both Quechua words and Spanish words that have been orthographically altered in order to emulate indigenous pronunciation. Certain critics have argued that by relegating the Spanish translations of the Quechua words to the back of the book, the Indian is once again marginalized (Maldonado 1996: 57-58). However, for Cornejo Polar, such criticisms have less relevance than what the decision to include this feature of the novel reveals about Ecuadorian society: its dual, conflictive and contradictory socio-cultural makeup (Cornejo Polar 2013: 123). He explains further how Icaza's work constitutes an opening up to its indigenous referent's cultural forms:

Icaza's project emphasizes the link between literary writing and orality. This is a question of opening up the language of art to the desires of speech, especially popular speech of the lower middle classes and even Quechua orality, in an attempt to tie aesthetic norms to daily life and free artistic language for use by the majority. The project itself implied an effort to oralise writing, or at least allow it to be permeated by inflections of effective voicing. (Cornejo Polar 2013: 122)

Whilst *Huasiungo* is essentially a Western-style novel, it does constitute a break from the erudite literary forms that dominated Ecuadorian literature in the early twentieth century (Cueva 1978: 30, Cornejo Polar 2013: 118).<sup>13</sup> Cueva remarks that social realist and *indigenista* writers such as Icaza were not interested in writing in the style of the 'escritura señorial-oligárquica' and took on the task of forging a national

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appropriate word for the processes of cultural transition taking place in Latin America because it takes into account the active and creative role of dominated cultures, as well as their resilience in the face of subordination (Rama 2012: 18-19). Rama observes that Arguedas also rejected the conception of acculturation, which, as Arguedas posited, conveyed the loss of one's own culture and acceptance of the coloniser's in its place. Rama identifies Arguedas's position in the speech he gave upon receiving the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega literary prize in 1968, in which he declares, 'I am not an acculturated man. I am a Peruvian who, like a cheerful demon, proudly speaks in Christian and in Indian, in Spanish and in Quechua' (Rama 2012: 21-22, Arguedas, as cited in Rama 2012: 22).

<sup>13</sup> Dominant models included classicism, *casticismo* and strong influences from poetry (Cornejo Polar 2013: 120).

literary language with the popular dialects of the Ecuadorian *cholos* rather than the 'lengua culta' of the *señores* (Cueva 1978: 30). Cornejo Polar also discusses Icaza's rejection of hegemonic linguistic forms in favour of reproducing the plebeian Spanish of the popular classes and assimilating words from Quechua and its derivations (Cornejo Polar 2013: 121). Thus, despite inevitable teething problems, Icaza was a pioneer in the establishment of an Ecuadorian literature that could portray the masses through more representative literary forms.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, both Cornejo Polar and Rama affirm that *indigenista* novels were not written for indigenous people (Cornejo Polar 1980: 24, Rama 2012: 98). This is no different in the case of *Huasiungo*, evident in the fact that the novel, despite sporadic interruptions in Quechua, is written in Spanish. Another indication is its content: the denunciation of the exploitation of the indigenous community. Keeping in mind the aforementioned call to action embedded in *indigenista* literature, it is possible to assume that Icaza's ideal reader is someone with a certain degree of agency to ameliorate the indigenous situation. According to Rama, the novel reached exceptionally large audiences and was even included in a re-issuing of *indigenista* novels at a 1957 book fair in Lima (2012: 100-101). This indicates the breadth of the circulation of the novel but low levels of literacy amongst Indians at the time would suggest that the real readers were mostly white Latin Americans or *mestizos* and

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<sup>14</sup> Cueva notes the difficulty of this task, which needed a great deal of time and would inevitably contain flaws and contradictions as it was being developed (Cueva 1978: 30-31). This goes some way to defending Icaza's work against criticism, such as that of Mario Vargas Llosa, who denounced the language used in *Huasiungo*, as well as other *indigenista* novels, as impoverished and rudimentary, constituting a 'dialecto bárbaro y adulterado' and claiming 'la solución residía en encontrar en español un estilo que diera por su sintaxis, su ritmo y aun su vocabulario el *equivalente* [sic] del idioma del indio' (Vargas Llosa, as cited in Maldonado 1996: 59). As we will see in the following chapter, it is possible to argue that Vargas Llosa was essentially demanding that Icaza should write as Arguedas does, an impossible feat given the different backgrounds of the two authors and their appearances at different stages in the course of development of Latin American literature. Even Arguedas himself discovered that attempts at this linguistic 'equivalente' of which Vargas Llosa speaks were inevitably artificial, opting instead to portray the indigenous world by writing his texts from an Andean worldview (Rowe 1997: xvii-xviii).



generally not members of the indigenous communities represented in the novels. It appears that, to a considerable extent, the ideal and real readers were one and the same, bringing to mind Rama's reference to a 'closed circuit' between lower-middle-class authors and readers (Rama 2012: 98).

### **Heterogeneity in José María Arguedas's *Los ríos profundos* (1958)**

In his final work, *Writing in the Air*, Cornejo Polar amends his theorising. He comments, 'I understood later that heterogeneity was infiltrating internal configurations, making them scattered, brittle, unstable and contradictory within their own limits' (Cornejo Polar 2013: 5). Therefore, heterogeneity exists not only between the four elements of literary production but also within each of them. Arnedo-Gómez argues that this modification to Cornejo Polar's original concept of heterogeneous literatures does not undermine its validity. Rather, it acknowledges further internal complexities, where not only one or more of the four elements may correspond to a different socio-cultural system than the others but that 'muchos o todos estos elementos también ellos mismos ya contienen características provenientes de diferentes sistemas socio-culturales' (Arnedo-Gómez 2006: 93). José María Arguedas and his works exemplify Cornejo Polar's argument. Heterogeneity permeates Arguedas's writing, characters and even the writer himself.

Arguedas was born on October 18, 1911 in the Andean community of Andahuaylas, in the Apurímac region of Southern Peru (Lambright 2007: 10). His parents 'belonged to the caste of whites' (Rowe and Schelling 1991: 212).<sup>15</sup> However,

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<sup>15</sup> Lambright clarifies that the concept of "white" in the Andean context denotes cultural identification more than phenotype or family heritage. Therefore, one can have indigenous blood and yet be considered white or have light skin but speak Quechua and identify with indigenous culture. Lambright

the early death of his mother and his father's remarriage to a woman who disliked him and treated him with cruelty meant that he spent most of his childhood with the family's Indian servants with whom he learned to speak Quechua (Márquez 1997: 65).<sup>16</sup> This experience would have profound implications on Arguedas's life and work, inculcating him with what Fass Emery calls 'alternative ways of knowing' (1996: 43). The following passage reveals this formative influence and the extent to which Arguedas's very nature and outlook were shaped by the Quechua worldview:

Los indios y especialmente las indias vieron en mí exactamente como si fuera uno de ellos, con la diferencia de que por ser blanco acaso necesitaba más consuelo que ellos...y me lo dieron a manos llenas. Pero algo de triste y de poderoso al mismo tiempo debe tener el consuelo que los que sufren dan a los que sufren más, y quedaron en mi naturaleza dos cosas muy sólidamente desde que aprendí a hablar: la ternura y el amor sin límites de los indios, el amor que se tienen entre ellos mismos y que le tienen a la naturaleza, a las montañas, a los ríos, a las aves; y el odio que tenían a quienes, casi inconscientemente, y como una especial de mandato Supremo, les hacían padecer. Mi niñez pasó quemada entre el fuego y el amor. (Arguedas, as cited in Rowe 1997: ix)<sup>17</sup>

Heterogeneity penetrates Arguedas's life in not only the cultural sphere but also in the professional sphere and in terms of his relocations from the Andean regions to the coast and vice versa. In 1929 Arguedas moved to Lima and in 1931 began his studies at San Marcos University (Márquez 1997: 65). With this move from the rural highlands to the capital on the coast, the duality that already existed within Arguedas was likely to be exacerbated. Frye alludes to the divisiveness of Peruvian geography,

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uses the word "white" to refer to 'members of the ruling class who primarily speak Spanish and participate in an Europeanising culture,' which is the use that I employ here (2007: 262-263fn5).

<sup>16</sup> Arguedas remarks that Spanish was a language he had no love for; rather it infuriated him (cited in Rowe 1997: ix).

<sup>17</sup> Lambright identifies two motives in this quote that are at the core of Arguedas's narrative: 'suffering and the solidarity of people who suffer' as well as 'the play of opposites: white/Indian, love/hatred, love/fire' (2007: 263fn6).

noting the physical, cultural and political distance between the Southern highlands and the country's capital (2012: xvi). The modern city of Lima contrasts so deeply with the *sierra* that Rowe refers to them as two different worlds 'in time as well as space' (1997: x). Arguedas himself discusses this, recognising the crucial role of the mountains in maintaining a strong native culture by slowing down Western penetration (cited in Rama 2012: 111). Thus, the socio-cultural fracture that began with the conquest is reinforced by the natural landscape of the country, which sharply divides those that live in the highlands from those on the coast.

Arguedas relocated many times during his childhood and adolescence.<sup>18</sup> Because of this, Cornejo Polar identifies in the writer a 'condición migrante'. The critic observes that arriving in Lima, which was still under the influence of its Hispanic lineage and harbored a deep disdain for people from the *sierra*, Arguedas defined himself as a 'forastero permanente', a man of several worlds and yet of none, destined to always exist in 'tierra ajena'.<sup>19</sup> Arguedas's emotional reaction upon returning to the *sierra* to teach in a high school in 1939 is indicative of the depth of his connection to the Andean world:

The *sierra* dazzled me upon my return. I became very sensitive. I couldn't hear a *huayno* in the streets without being extremely moved; I followed the singers – here they sing in the streets during festivals – fighting back my tears. (Arguedas, as cited in Lambright 2007: 13)

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<sup>18</sup> Lambright observes that one of the most significant relocations occurred when Arguedas and his brother escaped from their stepmother and fled to their uncle's hacienda in 1921. Arguedas came to intimately know the Indians that were living there in independent communities (Lambright 2007: 12).

<sup>19</sup> Exploring further the fragmentation experienced by the migrant Cornejo Polar states: 'Después de todo, migrar es algo así como nostalgia desde un presente que es o debería ser pleno las muchas instancias y estancias que se dejaron allá y entonces, un allá y un entonces que de pronto se descubre que son el acá de la memoria insomne pero fragmentada y el ahora que tanto corre como se ahonda, verticalmente, en un tiempo espeso que acumula sin sintetizar las experiencias del ayer y de los espacios que se dejaron atrás y que siguen perturbando con rabia o con ternura' (1995: 103).

However, Cornejo Polar goes on to argue that Arguedas needed to be situated within the urban space of the Peruvian capital in order to achieve his objective of defending the Indian and celebrating his culture (1995: 103-104). Here we see a commonality between Arguedas and the classic *indigenista* writers, who also came from the provinces. The urban centres were essential to these writers. There, they were able to acquire the literary skills and access the necessary institutions in order to write about the rural worlds from which they came. Perhaps even more importantly, Cornejo Polar remarks that it was the urban milieu where *indigenista* writers were exposed to ideologies such as Marxism, which would influence their political stance and writing. Life in the urban centres provided the education and awareness necessary to understand the broader issues at play in the rural areas throughout the Andean region and incentivise militant action (Cornejo Polar 1980: 17-18).

Despite insisting that he was not a professional writer, Arguedas wrote five novels and numerous short stories (Lambright 2007:15). Rowe remarks that Arguedas was painfully aware that he was not an Indian, and that he had experienced tensions when he acted as if he were one. This is reflected in his autobiographical collection of short stories *Agua* (1935), which portrays Arguedas's rejection of the world of whites he was born into and the impossibility of his self-identification as Indian (1997: ix).<sup>20</sup> It is likely his sense of exclusion intensified once he moved to Lima, far from the Andean world he loved, and began participating more in aspects of the dominant culture, such as university life. For Rowe, Arguedas's writing allowed him to narrow the distance between himself and his beloved *sierra*. He substantiates this idea with reference to Arguedas's remark that he sought to '¡describir la vida de aquella aldea, describirla de

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<sup>20</sup> Vargas Llosa observes that *Los ríos profundos* is also autobiographical in nature, sustaining that 'la materia que da origen al libro es la memoria del autor' (as cited in Cornejo Polar 1973: 104).

tal modo que su palpitación no fuera olvidada jamás, que golpeará como un río en la conciencia del lector!' (cited in Rowe 1997: x). Thus, Arguedas sought to narrow the distance between the Andes and the coast not only for himself but also for all those who were unfamiliar with its wonders.

In addition to being a writer of fiction, Arguedas was also a qualified anthropologist; he presented his doctoral thesis, 'Las comunidades de España y Perú', in 1963 (Lambright 2007: 14). Because of this training, he was able to study Quechua folklore as well as publish essays on Andean culture and translations of Quechua poetry (Márquez 1997: 65). In contrast to Arguedas's 'internal' view of Quechua culture, this Western method involves observing the 'Other' from a detached and objective perspective. Fass Emery designates Arguedas's fictional work as the product of an 'anthropological imagination' (1996). She notes the dynamic process of the creation of Quechua folklore that becomes the model for Arguedas's narrative, reflected in his argument that 'Peruvian folklore is [...] eloquent proof of the vitality of Indian culture that has not been vanquished or arrested, as may be supposed, but rather assimilating constantly elements it has found necessary from Western culture, has transformed itself, creating the unstable and dynamic *mestizo*' (Arguedas, as cited in Fass Emery 1996: 11-12). For Rama, Arguedas is a transcultural writer, writing from within cultural practices rather than isolating them as objects to be looked upon (cited in Fass Emery 1996: 11). It could be argued, then, that Arguedas transcends the limitations of the detached anthropological observer and draws upon all of his resources in order to produce a narrative that captures the essence of the Quechua universe and, as Rama posits, presents it as an alternative to the westernised norms of the dominant culture (Rama, as cited in Fass Emery 1996: 10).

Although he includes many Quechua words, poetry and songs in his novels and short stories, Arguedas writes in Spanish. It is therefore possible to assume that his intended reader is similar to that of Icaza and the traditional *indigenistas*: literate and Spanish-speaking. However, heterogeneity infiltrates *Los ríos profundos* (as well as Arguedas's other fictional works) and its referent to a much deeper degree than Icaza's *Huasipungo*. A clear example of heterogeneity in *Los ríos profundos* relates to narrative perspective. Rowe observes that after a period of seeking to reveal the Andean world through linguistic experiments, Arguedas became aware of the limitations of this method and decided to focus on conveying the Indian sensibility (Rowe 1997: xvii-xviii). Arguedas achieves this through the use of a first person narrator, who is essentially a literary projection of himself (Lambright 2007: 10). This sets him apart from Icaza and the other *indigenista* writers, who employ an omniscient third-person narrator. However, in *Los ríos profundos*, a second ethnographic narrative perspective can be detected. Rama concurs that there are indeed two narrators in this novel. One of these is the main narrator, the adult Ernesto, recounting his personal experiences as an adolescent in the Andean town of Abancay. Although they are the same person, it is necessary to distinguish this adult narrator from the child Ernesto who, whilst being the protagonist, is also merely a character with no control over the events that take place in the novel. The second narrator is an expert ethnologist. His function is to give the readers further information on the realities of Peru, which will aid in their ultimate understanding of the novel (Rama 2012: 189-191). Spitta explains that these narrators speak a fictional Quechua-Spanish as well as provide Western sociological and Andean animistic interpretations, explaining the

world through different paradigms (1995: 161).<sup>21</sup> It could be argued that these two narrators reflect different sides of the author's identity: Arguedas, the cultural *mestizo* who has an Indian worldview and deep love and knowledge of Indian culture and Arguedas, the anthropologist, who seeks to objectively study and portray the distinctive cultural complexity of the Andean universe.

In chapter six of *Los ríos profundos*, entitled 'Zumbayllu' (spinning top), the narrative perspective shifts, almost imperceptibly, into this ethnographic narrative voice, providing insight into the etymological and mythical meaning of the name of this toy that fascinates the young Ernesto and his classmates. Thus, the narrator engages in an act of what Spitta refers to as 'cultural translation', by which he attempts to reveal to the reader the complexity of Andean culture. Spitta goes on to explain that in this translation, the narrator outlines the metonymic associations of the word, which cannot be explained in Spanish for lack of words and associations. The reader learns that this toy represents the sound made by wings in flight, because of its onomatopoeic ending *yllu* (1995: 167-168). This suffix 'representa en una de sus formas la música que producen las pequeñas alas en vuelo: música que surge del movimiento de objetos leves' (Arguedas 1997: 65).<sup>22</sup> The object is also imbued with Quechua mythical notions of monsters and light because of the proximity of the ending *yllu* to the ending *illa*, which refers to 'cierta especie de luz y a los monstruos que nacieron heridos por los rayos de la luna' (65). The narrator describes several of the associations with these

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<sup>21</sup> Although, it is important to clarify that whilst Spitta does speak of the two narrators in Arguedas she argues that rather than two narrators, there is only one, who, divided culturally and linguistically, is a split subject (1995: 161). I would agree here. It appears that the adult Ernesto is in fact the ethnologist. Chapter four, 'La hacienda', begins with an ethnologist-like description of Abancay and its inhabitants and then seamlessly returns to the child Ernesto, seeking out the company of the Indians on the hacienda upon arriving, only to be rejected by them. Thus it appears that it is the adult Ernesto who gives the ethnographic descriptions and then continues with his childhood memories. (38-40).

<sup>22</sup> All subsequent quotations from *Los ríos profundos* will be taken from this 1997 edition and will be cited by page number only.

endings: *tankayllu*, or horsefly; a dancer, known as Tankayllu, seemingly due to the way he danced; and *pinkuyllu*, a flute the Indians play during festivals, whose music drives some people to 'enfurecerse cantando las danzas guerreras antiguas', whilst others 'se golpean ciegamente, se sangran y lloran después' (65-67). The shift back from this 'rational' and objective narrative voice to the child protagonist's voice is clear as Ernesto announces the arrival of a *zumbayllu* at his school: '¡Zumbayllu! En el mes de mayo traje Antero el primer zumbayllu al Colegio. Los alumnos pequeños lo rodearon...lban gritando: Zumbayllu, zumbayllu!' (68).

In her analysis of Arguedas's novel *Yawar Fiesta* (1941), Lambright remarks that the writer takes great care to carve out a narrative space for Quechua culture. Arguedas provides an insider's perspective of Indian traditions and ceremonies, allowing indigenous culture to command over the text (2007: 95). In this way, Arguedas, by giving an ethnographic description of the meanings and associations behind the *zumbayllu*, immerses the reader in this aspect of indigenous culture and prepares him/her for the ensuing events. The child Ernesto retakes the narrative voice and reveals that, whilst culturally *mestizo* and a Quechua speaker with a partial Indian worldview, he does not know what a *zumbayllu* is. In her analysis of Arguedas's 'El horno viejo', Fass Emery argues that a panoramic, ethnographic perspective 'is a compensatory strategy that empowers the narrator, that allows him to overcome his alienated experience as an outsider by giving it a structure he commands [...], from a controlling distance (1996: 51). Arguably, the same occurs here. Ernesto's exclusion is evident as the students run excitedly with Antero to the courtyard to play with the *zumbayllu*. Ernesto follows anxiously, wondering what this object is. The ending *yllu* is familiar to him and he asks himself '¿qué podía nombrar esta palabra cuya terminación me recordaba bellos y misteriosos objetos?' (68). Ernesto's question



becomes more significant to the reader due to the previous ethnographic explanations about this Quechua suffix. It illuminates Ernesto's position and, to a certain extent, alleviates his alienation. He does not quite belong to the Indian world and yet can claim a strong connection to certain aspects of it, particularly its language and the meanings it evokes for him. The *zumbayllu* becomes an object of great strength for Ernesto. According to Cornejo Polar, it represents the association of memory, music and nature; resources which Ernesto, from a perspective imbued with Indian magic, draws upon to defend himself against negative experiences (1973: 121-122).

Ernesto is the novel's heterogeneous referent. The novel recounts his personal experiences at a Catholic boarding school in a village in the Peruvian *sierra*. It is interesting to note the contrast here with *Huasiungo*. Whilst Ernesto certainly comes into contact with the indigenous *colonos* of the Patibamba hacienda in Abancay and even shares their experience when they revolt against the landowners, this community is not the referent, nor is their plight the central theme of the novel. It appears that Arguedas, in order to offer a more genuine rendition of the Andean universe, saw the need to reveal it from the perspective of an individual. The use of an individual, central protagonist and narrator is indeed a Western literary convention. However, here it allows Arguedas to provide a more incisive portrayal of the indigenous world than that which Icaza tried to achieve by using a 'collective' referent. Whilst Icaza presents a mechanical view of the conflict, focusing on the economic aspect, Arguedas uses Ernesto as a heterogeneous referent in order to develop the tensions that ensue at the conflictual crossing of the two worlds. Such tensions arise because the two worlds pertain to different social orders with different world views: one, 'the Indian mythical worldview', the other, 'the landowning class's ethic of social domination, underpinned by Catholicism' (Rowe 1997: xviii). Thus for Rowe, Arguedas depicts the oppression

'as an equilibrium of forces [...] in which the conscious attitudes of both sides play an active part', avoiding a mechanical response that would indicate 'an ambiguous attitude to the oppressed. For though they are shown to be victims of injustice, they are treated by the writer as objects, which is to collaborate with the ideology of the oppressor' (1997: xiii-xiv).

Ernesto, like Arguedas, does not identify with the class he was born into, rather he feels connected to and sustained by the Indian world – an integral part of his life which is thrown into chaos when he enters the Catholic boarding school (Rowe 1997: xix). This culturally *mestizo* protagonist compelled Arguedas to imbue his Western-style novel with Quechua cultural elements. The result is a text that is as heterogeneous as its author and referent. The first few days at the school are for Ernesto 'días de confusión y desasosiego' (40). To combat his feelings, Ernesto recalls the goodbye song the Indian women dedicated to him when he had to leave the last *ayllu* (Indian community) he had lived in, where he had found refuge when his father was persecuted by politicians. He remembers of the Indians that 'me protegieron y me infundieron la impagable ternura en que vivo' (41). Indeed the novel is replete with Quechua songs and music. Fass Emery sees this celebration of music in Arguedas's work 'as the vehicle for a transcendent mode of knowledge' (1996: 43).

It is because of these experiences living with Indians that Rowe observes in Ernesto an 'intense relation with *things*' [sic], particularly nature, from which he draws strength. Nature, from Ernesto's Indian worldview, is imbued with magical presences and is not separate from humans; they are both part of the same, continuous, natural order (Rowe 1997: xix). However, Ernesto's experiences at the school, particularly his observations of the other students' sexual encounters with 'la opa', break his relationship with the natural order. He subsequently turns to nature itself to heal this

damage (Rowe 1997: xx-xxi). Ernesto is continuously drawn to the Pachachaca river, whose waters are like a lifeblood which flows, bringing with it strength and renewal (63-64). It is not only the river that provides Ernesto with solace. The bridge, constructed by the Spanish and thus evocative of Ernesto's connection to the Western world, is similarly endowed with healing powers. The extent of the interconnectedness of the natural world and human-made world is evident as Ernesto proclaims 'yo no sabía si amaba más al puente o al río. Pero ambos despejaban mi alma, la inundaban de fortaleza y de heroicos sueños' (63). Here we see the incorporation of Quechua magical-religious beliefs in order to present a fuller and more coherent portrayal of the Quechua universe (Rowe 1979: 64). As Lambright remarks, the river is connected to the Quechua underworld, referred to as both *apu* (god), and devil. It has its own soul and Ernesto believes it understands the souls of children like him and that it can connect him with his father and doña Felipa, the leader of the group of *chicheras* who protest the disappearance of their salt supply (2007: 131). For Ernesto, doña Felipa embodies the magical powers of nature and, displaying his allegiance to the Indians, he takes her side in the conflict (Rowe 1997: xxii). One final example are the Inca walls in Cuzco which, for Ernesto, are alive with movement (Arguedas 1997: 5-6). They evoke for him Quechua songs infused with notions of blood and he wonders if he can say "'puk'tik' yawar rumi", piedra de sangre hirviente' (5). He realizes that the wall is static but for him 'hervía por todas sus líneas y la superficie era cambiante, como la de los ríos en verano' (5).

The healing, magical powers of nature often aid Ernesto in making some sense of the conflictual and contradictory world he lives in. However, this is not always the case. He arrives at the boarding school after spending his formative years in the Indian communities and years of travelling from town to town with his father. Here, according

to Lambright, Ernesto is inducted into the dominant society and obligated to live by its norms. Because he is a *forastero*, or outsider, this new environment presents Ernesto with the challenge of finding his place (Lambright 2007: 114). Cornejo Polar observes that Abancay is a society characterized by dissonance, and that Ernesto, situated in the intersection of the two spheres, *indio* and *blanco*, is the one who most perceives and suffers from its contrasts (1973: 156). A great deal of Ernesto's suffering is caused by his lack of complete belonging to either group. Socially, he belongs to the world of the whites, but Rowe argues that his father's profession, as a travelling lawyer, has led Ernesto to become emotionally disconnected from that world. However, despite feeling more comfortable around Indians, Ernesto cannot completely identify with them either (1979: 69). Lambright observes that the Catholic school does not provide Ernesto with the sense of community that nurtured him as a child living with Indians in the *ayllus*. Rather, it is a place of violence, conflict and isolation (2007: 105). Yet an evening spent in doña Felipa's *chichería* appears to heighten Ernesto's sense of alienation also. Frequently leaving the school to seek Indian company, Ernesto enters the drinking house alone, attracted by the harp music coming from inside. He remains standing and instantly feels out of place because, as it is Sunday, he is wearing his best suit, an obvious sign of his connection to the world of the *señores*. Although the waitress recognizes him and is kind enough to bring him a glass of *chicha*, Ernesto realises that 'me miraban con extrañeza, muchos' and feels that he should either leave or sit at a table, but '¿junto a quién, en dónde?' (174-175). Tension arises when there is a confrontation between the harpist, a group of Indian soldiers, two Spanish-speaking civil guards and the *chicheras*, which ends with a gunshot, the arrest of the harpist and everybody leaving the *chichería*. The night brings other occurrences that leave Ernesto in need of comfort. Curiously, he finds this comfort at the school where,

for the first time he feels 'protegido por los muros' and finally understands 'lo que era la sombra del hogar.' It seems it is now the school that offers Ernesto a sense of home, with its 'espacios familiares' which, in all of his changes of residence, he had never experienced (193). Clearly, Ernesto finds solace and hostility in both the Western and the Indian world. However, Rowe observes that, in the end it is the Indian world that most aids Ernesto to reconcile the issues that the contrasts in Abancay present to him. Above all, it is the river, which represents 'the deep flow of feeling and strength to overcome obstacles', which allows Ernesto to resolve conflict and transcend the tensions that he faces in such a contradictory environment (1997: xxiii).

## **Conclusion**

In the 1920s and 1930s, in Latin American nations with large indigenous populations, a social, political and literary movement took place. This movement, known as *indigenismo*, constituted a shift in attitudes towards indigenous peoples. As part of this movement, predominantly white, middle-class artists, musicians and writers sought to represent Indian identity and culture in their work. The movement sparked great debate and polemic. At its core lay the serious issue of the long-established exploitation of Indian communities, at the hands of oligarchical landowners. In politics, intellectuals demanded solutions to the 'indigenous question', which they argued was a critical step in the process of modernization. In literature, writers denounced the abusive treatment of Indians, using their novels and short stories as a call to action addressed to fellow members of white middle-class sectors of society.

*Indigenista* literature was seen by many as an 'authentic' representation of the indigenous world but was also condemned by others for its exteriority and racist

attitudes. Cornejo Polar drew attention to the counterproductive nature of such criticism, which disregards the heterogeneity of the literature and the conflictual socio-cultural space in which it is embedded. He took up Mariátegui's argument that such literature must be interpreted using a method that takes into account the particular modes of literary production of nations that contain a dualism, such as the Quechua-Spanish dualism of certain Latin American countries, and thus developed his concept of heterogeneous literatures

In this study I have adapted this concept to Jorge Icaza's *Huasipungo* and found that examining the novel through this lens reveals complex socio-cultural processes behind its processes of production and distribution. The author, although pertaining to the white, westernized sector of Ecuadorian society, did have a certain amount of knowledge of indigenous culture and issues, which he likely drew from in order to write his novel. Although the theme of the novel and the descriptive language Icaza uses demonstrate a decidedly westernized worldview, the novel modifies Western literary conventions. The novel abandons the traditional central and individual protagonist, in favour of a symbolic one who represents the whole indigenous community. It also employs an episodic structure that evokes indigenous oral traditions, and uses popular and indigenous linguistic forms rather than erudite literary language.

Cornejo Polar amended his concept after he came to the realisation that heterogeneity exists not only between the elements of literary production, but also within each of them. José María Arguedas and his writing are perhaps one of the most poignant examples of this. Arguedas's unique childhood experiences led him to reject the culture of the white middle class he was born into and embrace the culture of the indigenous peoples of the Peruvian highlands. For Arguedas, this split identity brought considerable tensions, as he struggled to reconcile these two opposing forces.

Intensifying the effects of this cultural duality were Arguedas's several moves between rural and urban spaces which, in Peru, contrast physically, culturally and politically to the point of constituting two different worlds. Finally, Arguedas's parallel career as an anthropologist had a considerable impact upon his writing. The writer was fascinated by the way in which the Quechua culture incorporated Western cultural elements, thus continuously transforming itself. Arguedas drew upon his ethnographic knowledge of Quechua culture, as well as his personal experiences of this world, in order to craft his heterogeneous narrative, presenting it as an alternative to the dominant culture.

*Los ríos profundos* is a profoundly heterogeneous text. Heterogeneity is evident in the presence of two narrators, who could be seen to reflect different sides of the author's identity. Like Arguedas, Ernesto is culturally *mestizo*. He too rejects the westernized world he was born into and, as a result of growing up among Indian communities, has a partial Indian worldview. The novel is replete with songs, music, magical-religious beliefs and descriptions of nature; all aspects of Quechua culture which Ernesto not only delights in but also turns to in times of need, particularly when his relationship with the natural order is broken.

This study questions criticism that regards *indigenista* novels as either 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' representations of the indigenous world. In analysing these two novels through the lens of 'heterogeneity' this study demonstrates the way in which this method of analysis is more appropriate for literature embedded in Latin American socio-cultural contexts. Furthermore, the analysis has brought to light the significant socio-cultural processes behind the production of *indigenista* novels and demonstrated the depth of the heterogeneity that permeates each of the elements of literary production. This provides not only a more sophisticated literary analysis of the two novels, but also a deeper understanding of the societies in which they were

produced and of the processes of transculturation taking place within them. Studying such processes provides invaluable insight into the way in which dominated cultures update themselves and ultimately resist assimilation into the dominant culture. Arguedas wrote extensively on Quechua culture, which, for more than five centuries has remained resilient despite its subordination to the dominant culture. Close examination of Arguedas's ethnographic texts would further illuminate the ideas treated in this study and, in turn, assist in understanding his fiction to an even greater extent.



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