

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore the treatment of Religion in the works of José María Arguedas and Rosario Castellanos.

The treatment of the topic of Religion in the novelistic worlds of these two authors is justified by the absence of any similar study. There have been prolific literary criticisms which treat the works of José María Arguedas, and a few which deal with those of Rosario Castellanos, but the subject of Religion has been incidental to the other areas in which research has been done.

Rosario Castellanos (1925-1974) of Mexico, and José María Arguedas (1911-1969) of Peru, both display, in their works, intimate knowledge of the religious practices of their people. They treat, in great detail, Roman Catholicism, which is the officially recognized religion of their respective countries, and also give in-depth treatment to the still-existing indigenous religious practices. The deep understanding and knowledge they display, in relation to Indians and Whites, is due to the fact that both authors, who come from a White background, spent years of their childhood among the Indians. This afforded them the opportunity to become familiar with the religious customs with which they deal in their literary works.

The first chapter of this study gives us background information of the Pre-Colombian religious practices of the people in both Mexico and Peru. It also treats the effects the Conquest had on the religious lives of the people.

Chapter II deals with the contemporary role of the Church and of its close alliance with the ruling classes over the centuries. The chapter also treats the detrimental effect the Church's conservative role plays in the lives of the young.

In Chapter III, the authors are shown to capture, very skilfully, the process of assimilation and amalgamation of religious practices and superstitions, common to both Whites and Indians.

Chapter IV deals with the actual manifestation of religious principles among the people and also treats the change in attitude towards religion by both Indians and Whites.

Although Chapter V discusses only Castellanos' Oficio de tinieblas in relation to religious fanaticism, because Arguedas does not present this topic, yet the study would be incomplete without the inclusion of this aspect of the theme. This subject is treated with complete mastery and, for this reason, acquires universality because the rules which apply to Catalina's religious fanaticism can be said to apply, in a broad sense, to fanaticism per se.

Although the subject of religion might seem more related to a sociological treatise, yet Castellanos and Arguedas display in their works equal importance in its presentation from an aesthetic point of view. Both authors show their deep concern for their fellowmen and for the destiny of their respective countries. Religion is one of the most important factors treated by them, and their skill and successful handling of the topic, as true literary artists, will be clearly demonstrated in the following chapters.