



Homesickness

BY HENRY BELLAMANN

WOODCUT BY ERNEST HASKELL

There is a land so far away,
Almost it seems never to have been.
There are dull rocks
And the brown flanks of barren hills.
There a listless stream
Waits in the shallows,
Nor desires the sea.

Old walls are rooted deep,
And gaunt houses sit upon their haunches
Like starved animals;
Sometimes their hollow windows
Show a wolfish gleam
In the heavy dark.

But I am kin to it.
The old-wife hills,
I am close kin to them.

Here the cloudy light
Circles on crystalline peaks,
And the soft fall of satin petals
Stirs wide eddies of perfume
In the emerald pools
Of walled gardens.
Here the delicate accent
Of bright waters
And the cadenced music
Of a gentle tongue
Float upon the air
And curl themselves in silence
As late sunlight
Fades in deep rivers.

The grapes have purpled many times
Against that wall.
I know the fountain's legend now
By heart;
The story of this gracious land
Is told.

Those harsh, time-eaten hills,
Like peasant women, stooped and shawled,
They crouch as though to warm themselves together;
They wait, as peasant women wait,
For their own sons.

I must go back to them;
I must go back.



Maria Concepción

BY KATHERINE ANNE PORTER

DRAWINGS BY ROSS SANTEE



MARIA CONCEPCIÓN walked carefully, keeping to the middle of the white, dusty road, where the maguey thorns and the treacherous curved spines of organa cactus had not gathered so profusely. She would have enjoyed resting for a moment in the dark shade by the roadside, but she had no time to waste drawing cactus needles from her feet. Juan and his *jefe* would be waiting for their food in the damp trenches of the buried city.

She carried about a dozen living fowls slung over her right shoulder, their feet fastened together. Half of them fell upon the flat of her back, the balance dangled uneasily over her breast. They wriggled their benumbed and swollen legs against her neck, they twisted their stupefied, half-blind eyes upward, seeming to peer into her face inquiringly. She did not see them or think of them. Her left arm was a trifle tired with the weight of the food basket, and she was hungry after her long morning's work.

Under her clean bright-blue cotton rebozo her straight back outlined itself strongly. Instinctive serenity softened her black eyes, shaped like almonds set far apart, and tilted a bit endwise. She walked with the free, natural, yet guarded, ease of the primitive woman carrying an unborn child. The shape of her body was easy, the

swelling life was not a distortion, but the right, inevitable proportions of a woman. She was entirely contented, calmly filled with a sense of the goodness of life.

Her small house was half-way up a shallow hill, under a clump of perutrees, a wall of organa cactus inclosing it on the side nearest the road. Now she came down into the valley, divided by the narrow spring, and crossed a bridge of loose stones near the hut where Maria Rosa the bee-keeper lived with her old godmother, Lupe, the medicine-woman. Maria Concepción had no faith in the charred owl bones, the singed rabbit fur, the messes and ointments sold by Lupe to the ailing of the village. She was a good Christian, and bought her remedies, bottled, with printed directions that she could not read, at the drug-store near the city market, where she went almost daily with her fowls. But she often purchased a jar of honey from young Maria Rosa, a pretty, shy child only fifteen years old.

Maria Concepción and her husband, Juan Villegas, were each a little past their eighteenth year. She had a good reputation with the neighbors as an energetic, religious woman. It was commonly known that if she wished to buy a new rebozo for herself or a shirt for Juan, she could bring out a sack of hard silver pesos for the purpose.