Photo Opportunity

Why should I confine myself to the U.S. when in Peru I find this yam-brown tear, this altiplano brow, This cactus in snow, this orchid of volcanoes. This red and yellow shawl bursting with poverty In sad, twinkling colors? Tourist, photograph my llama For two hundred inti, demonstrative arms say. Once perhaps a Monday morning across Lake Titicaca, Manco Capac and Mama Occlo settled this island In the waves' prophetic underglow. Lakewater, pure as Inca symbols Strained through our ignorance, takes us To the isle of the birth of Inca where tribes have disappeared Into something other, like biodegradable patterns on silver cups In the flames of the Spaniards. Now half-toothless women And toothless half-women and rag-overwrapped children With cheeks like gold gone black, amble with llamas on small trails. Tourist, their hands yell, I'll pose. Photograph me and the llama. And they point, the lucky ones, whose language hasn't folded For the dollar. Child, aim toward your Andean camel, Orient to my camera. Two hundred inti is an underflow of profit, Demand five as in other markets, offer the service of your heritage On Lake Titicaca, though only on the reeds of lashed history, Though abounding bacteria which swallowed slime and poison to bequeath deep clarities

In Titicaca ebbing, acted invisibly. I see this girl has gulped down begging; may the gods Flick gold in her eyes.

Edward Locke