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“Arguedasmachine: Techno-Indigenism and Affect in the Andes”

At the heart of the Peruvian writer José María Arguedas’s final book, an unfinished and posthumously published novel entitled *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*, there is a strange scene of industrial epiphany. A factory owner, Don Angel, is showing a visitor, Don Diego, around one of the fish processing factories that dominate the coastal boomtown of Chimbote. The two find themselves in the very bowels of this technological beast, which is almost deserted because here the machines have effectively replaced human labor, leaving only technicians who are observers with mainly supervisory roles. At the core of operations are a series of cyclones and centrifuges: the cyclones are “immense cylinders” that form and separate off the caked fishmeal, “pressed-together meat and bones,” from the liquid broth poured into them (129). And then there is what happens to the residue, the “oil-makin’ process,” a secret at the center of the production process that “nobody has observed” (129). The two pass by the cyclones with some caution, and a sense of danger. The visitor’s tailcoat “looked as if it were going to be caught by the sudden violent flames that were revolving inside of the cyclones” (129). They head towards the centrifuges. Here Don Diego experiences something like a techno-affective epiphany of cyborg transformation:

A few steps beyond the doorway the visitor was brought to a halt. He was not breathing with his own chest, but with that of the eight machines; the surroundings were brightly lit. Don Diego began to turn around with arms outstretched; a bluish vapor began to issue from his nose; in the gloss of his hairy shoes all of the lights and pressures inside there were reflected. A musical joy resembling the joyousness of the most high-curling waves that roll up onto beaches unprotected by islands, threatening no one, developing all alone, cascading onto the sand with more power and rejoicing than the waterfalls in Andean rivers and ravines carved out by torrents--those ravines on whose banks slender plumes of flowering grass quiver--a similar joy was swirling inside the visitor’s body, silently swirling; for that very reason Don Angel and the many workmen who sat, resting against the gallery walls, drinking anchovy broth, felt that the world’s strength, so centered in the ritual dance and in those eight machines, was getting to them, making them transparent. (130)

This is an extraordinary scene in many ways, perhaps above all for the fact that it plays such a crucial role in a work by what is perhaps Latin America's most famous indigenist writer, who is usually taken to pit an Andean spiritual cosmovision squarely against the bleak rationality of Western modernity. But I take this instance of a delirious rapture at the heart of the machine as both entryway and key to the whole of Arguedas's writing. I offer another Arguedas from the one presented by the critical canon: an Arguedas machine that "nobody has observed." This Arguedas machine is hard at work fabricating a techno-indigenism that both separates and presses together the various elements of Peruvian culture, much like the cyclones and centrifuges of Don Angel's factory, but it finally breaks down by becoming fully immanent to the affective flows on which it operates.

The Fox in the Machine

The Don Diego who experiences a midnight-hour epiphany deep in the fish processing factory is, to say the least, a curious fellow. Upon meeting him, the factory owner Don Angel "could not help feeling amused and curious." For his visitor is "a lean gentleman with long, spare whiskers (with widely separated hairs sticking out one by one almost horizontally)" (*The Fox from Up Above* 89). Such physical oddities are an indication that there is more than a little of the titular fox in Don Diego. Indeed, at the end of this long episode, after the factory tour and after Don Angel has taken him to a local strip bar and whorehouse, Diego is addressed directly by a stuttering fisherman, who for this one moment magically speaks without impediment: "'You, you're a fox,' Stut told him, having no difficulty speaking. 'Do you come from up the mountains or from the bottom of La Calzada reedbeds?'" (137; translation modified). Stut ("el Tarta" in the Spanish), a "miserly stammering poet" (46; "*poeta tartamudo, avaro*") is referring to the pre-conquest myth that loosely structures Arguedas's book: of a millennial dialogue between a fox from above and a fox from below, a fox of the Andes and the mountain tops endless renewing contact with a fox of the coast and the mountain valleys. These foxes are taken from the record of Inca belief transcribed in the sixteenth century and translated from the Quechua by Arguedas himself as *Dioses y hombres de Huarochirí*. In this text, the foxes meet each to give an account to the other of the situation in their respective domains: "The one who came from down below asked the other 'How are

those up above?” Upon finishing his account, the fox from up above “followed up by asking the other ‘And the men from down below, are they the same?’” (*Dioses y hombres* 36, 37). Similarly, then, in Arguedas’s own novel the two foxes appear briefly with their own voices a couple of times, continuing their conversation, “seeing and learning” (26) from this latest transformation in Peru’s age-long history, the country’s heady, unsteady and uneven, industrial modernization. Yet now, beyond this distanced role as commentators and observers, the foxes seem now to have permeated even the social world of Chimbote’s frontier town industrial capitalism.

For as Sara Castro-Klarén observes, many critics “have seen in the dancing, acrobatic figure of the highly zoomorphic Diego a sort of impersonation of the Fox from Down Below” (“Like a pig, when he’s thinkin’” 312). Julio Ortega hedges his bets somewhat with the use of quotation marks in referring to “the ‘fox’ Don Diego” (xxv), but in fact, some critics quite straightforwardly identify Don Diego with the fox from down below: José Luis Rouillon, for instance (“Mito y cristianismo” 348). Martin Lienhard, likewise, writes that Diego is “recognizable as the ‘fox from down below’” and proceeds with an extensive analysis of the scene on this basis (*Cultura andina* 115). On the other hand, elsewhere the same Lienhard identifies Diego with the fox from up above, and Angel with the fox from down below (“La ‘andinización’ del vanguardismo urbano” 328). But such a simple transcription of Diego as fox is surely reductive. Diego has something of the fox about him. But with his “long, very modern jacket” and his silk handkerchief (*The Fox from Up Above* 89, 90), he is also equally recognizable as something of a Lima dandy, who cares a little too much about his appearance and his clothing, attempting to transcend the provincialism of local fashion: “It’s not always necessary,” he tells Don Angel, “to have gone abroad to present oneself in clothes that are *in* in the Europes and North Americas for the season” (90). And at the same time he preserves some ironic distance from these same desires nurtured by a burgeoning internal market: “to tell the truth, with this cap I have in my hand some of us are getting a big laugh out of our modernities. What matters is to enjoy oneself at the fish meal’s expense” (90). In short, there is something *foxy* about Don Diego, in all senses of the term: at times he plays the dancing animal observer, at times the modern factory inspector, but he cannot ever quite be pinned down to these, or indeed any other, roles. He escapes such categorizations, following his own line of flight within the globalized

productive machine. And he seduces both Don Angel and the other factory workers, encouraging them and us to take flight similarly.

“Diego” becomes an unstable signifier marking the site of an identity that is always just out of reach--perhaps better, of a set of desires and affects that continually evade fixed identification. At the shifting point marked by the name Diego, nature, technology, and humanity collide, the land meets the sea, the Andes jut against the Pacific, and the local opens out directly onto the global. As Diego himself observes, in this the largest fishing port in the world of the time, the fish industry is “squeezing the Hudson along with the Marañon into the Bay of Chimbote; putting the Thames into the Apurímac as well as a dash of Paris, the Seine, the Latin Quarter...” (90-91). On the one hand, Chimbote is multiply peripheral: an outpost of peripheral capitalism, a boomtown sprung up on the coast. On the other hand, Chimbote is suddenly central, in the middle of it all. And in that middle, anything can happen. We see in and with Don Diego a series of becomings: becoming animal, becoming mythic, becoming human, becoming molecular. These becomings are all *machined* within the factory environment. As Diego takes on a series of machinic qualities, “breathing [not] with his own chest, but with that of the eight machines [. . .] turn[ing] round with arms outstretched; a bluish vapor beg[inning] to issue from his nose” (130), he conjures up a “musical joy” resembling ocean breakers crashing over deserted islands, in turn comparable only to Andean waterfalls and ravines. But the fact that the highland rivers are here invoked only to be superseded is significant: for if in his previous novel, *Todas las sangres*, the Andean “*yawar mayu*,” or river in bloody flood, “conquers and conquers completely,” Arguedas comments in *The Fox from Up Above’s* “Second Diary” that “now I cannot fit it within chapter III of the new novel” (83). It is chapter three that consists of the dialogue between Diego and Angel. And it is chapter three that contains this epiphanic moment in which the *yawar mayu*, Arguedas’s obsession throughout much of his previous fiction, most notably the novel *Deep Rivers*, finally fades before a more powerful conjunction of forces, the machinic apparatus and the crashing ocean. Here, as Diego becomes one more moving part within the machine, another swirling centrifuge, the dance and the machines together concentrate within them “the world’s strength,” which makes all around “transparent” (130).

It is fitting that it should be the stammering Stut who later declares that Diego is “a fox.” For in different ways both Stut and Diego are figures for Arguedas himself in

this book. But they are far from the only ones: there is also, for instance, the crazy, barefoot black preacher, Moncada, and his friend the former miner, Don Esteban. After so much of his previous fiction (notably *Deep Rivers* and *El Sexto*) had so often been thinly described autobiography, in this his final novel Arguedas now multiplies wildly the number of author figures populating his work. In addition to Stut, Diego, Moncada, and Don Esteban, there are the foxes themselves (whom Christian Fernández argues in “The Death of the Author” are in fact the novel’s true narrators), and notably also the interspersed Diaries, the prefatory speech, and the appended letters in which Arguedas seems to be speaking in his own anguished voice. For the book is studded with authorial interventions that interrupt the narrative and reflect on the process of writing itself, as well as on the plot and the characters it contains. The result is an eminently nonlinear and open work, composed of a series of brief stories, often presented as long dialogues as individual characters recall their past histories and so situate themselves within the rapid transformations of capitalist development affecting them all. But these individual narrative arcs never fully converge. Rather, they coexist uneasily, precariously shoulder to shoulder in the shared space of a city that has sprung up almost from nowhere around this dislocated pole of economic expansion. Plus there is the fact that the book remains unfinished. In the book’s “Last diary?” Arguedas outlines how he might have continued, and reveals some of the fates he has had in store for individual characters. Then among the other paratexts with which the novel concludes is a letter to his publisher, apologizing for the text’s incomplete state, describing it as “a body that’s half-blind and deformed but perhaps capable of walking” (262). In a postscript to this letter, Arguedas writes: “In Chile I got hold of a 22-caliber revolver. I have tried it out. It works. It’s alright. It won’t be easy to pick the day to do it” (263; translation modified). This is a book that begins with a discussion of suicide, ends with a suicide note, and is signed with the author’s own dead body. It is a book in which the author submerges himself, exiting only with his own literal death. Yet in so doing, he lays out his literary machinery, its breakdowns as well as its functioning parts, and also thereby the stuttering mechanism of his work as a whole.

Gilles Deleuze writes that a great writer is always a stutterer: “He is a foreigner in his own language, he carves out a nonpreexistent foreign language *within* his own language. He makes the language itself scream, stutter, stammer, or murmur” (“He Stuttered” 110). Like the examples Deleuze provides (notably Kafka and Beckett),

Arguedas is himself writing in a language other than his native tongue: he had been brought up with Quechua as his first language, only subsequently mastering Spanish. In some of his earlier work, notably *Yawar Fiesta* and *El Sexto*, the way in which Arguedas infused Quechua vocabulary and syntax into Spanish, or tried to conjure up regional dialects of Spanish, threatened to fall into the sentimental portrayal of the rural other typical of *costumbrismo*. This was a sort of superficial realism (a realism of appearances) later replaced by a psychological realism (a realism of motivations) in his penultimate book, the epic social novel *Todas las sangres*. But perhaps thanks to the criticism that *Todas las sangres* faced at the hands of Peru's critics and intellectuals (for which see the lengthy discussion edited by Guillermo Rochabrún as *La mesa redonda sobre <<Todas las sangres>>*), in *The Fox from Up Above* Arguedas finally abandons all attempts to present either a smooth surface or coherent depth to his fiction. Realism is not his aim: "it's not exactly that I'm trying to describe Chimbote," he tells us (86). In this final book, in both his "stammering diary" (83) and in the narrative chapters that he terms "Boilings" (189), language itself stutters. The complex interrelation between machinic, natural, and human is laid bare. And so the key to what Deleuze and Guattari would call Arguedas's "minor literature" is finally revealed.

Arguedas's work is almost always read through his biography, and this temptation is all the more appealing when it comes to *The Fox from Up Above*, given this book's searingly personal reflections upon his own process of production as well as his own mortality, his own depression, and his doubled suicide: the failed attempt with which the book opens ("In April of 1966, a little more than two years ago, I tried to commit suicide" [9]) and the successful bid to kill himself that marks the novel's (in)completion ("I am leaving you an envelope containing documents explaining the reasons for the decision I have made" [264]). Yet it is another of the novel's author figures who perhaps demonstrates what is at stake in Arguedas's corporeal investment in his art. Don Esteban is dying as a result of the coal dust he ingested while working in a provincial mine. But his ambition is to make of his sickness an advantage, to profit from the foreign matter lodged in his diseased lungs. Ritually, he coughs up black phlegm and wraps the magical mineral in newspaper: "He knelt calmly and began to cough, and the sputum he ejected was almost completely black. On the surface of the phlegm coal dust intensified its ill-starred color in the light; seemingly imprisoned there, it moved about, trying to break free from the phlegm with which it was mixed"

(138). Esteban has made his sickly body part of a production process, methodically spitting out a mixture that, as with the slop fed into the fish meal factory's centrifuges, has only to be separated out to yield its precious treasure. (Meanwhile, the factory is itself viewed as a body: its machines "swallow anchovies and defecate gold" [125].) Esteban believes that if he can cough up five ounces of coal he will be saved, so avoiding the death that has already come to all his former mining colleagues: "gram by gram I'll keep on goin' 'til me lung heals" (143). But his own body has also been transformed into a mine: he himself has become indistinguishable from one of the seams that he formerly worked, and so in coughing up the black gold from his lungs he is also working on himself just as he once worked at the coalface for five soles a day. And likewise Arguedas himself invests his tortured body and suffering psyche into production; his very mortality is at stake. "Either I have been struggling with death," he writes, "or else I think I have been struggling with death at quite close quarters while writing this intermittent, plaintful tale" (256). Like Esteban, his production is intensely physical, coterminous with his own pain: "I go, then, however, I can, to write chapter III, with this fierce pain in my neck, with this malaise produced by insomnia and fatigue" (86). Writing is intimately associated with Arguedas's suicidal thoughts ("I'd only write something when I was determined to take my own life, out of nothing more than feelings of worthlessness and deterioration" [87]), and yet it is also a means of staving off death, and so, like Esteban's expectoration, promises a possible cure: "Yesterday I wrote four pages. I wrote them as therapy, but not without thinking they might be read. [. . .] Because if I don't write and get published, I'll put a bullet in myself" (12, 17).

The affects of a machine-man

While it is true that Arguedas's writing is deeply personal, it is in no way either some kind of quasi-natural testimonial narrative, nor in any significant sense the distanced self-reflection of an author fully in control of his faculties. No wonder he should insist that he is not a "professional" writer like others of the Latin American literary Boom of the 1960s (he mentions Julio Cortázar, Carlos Fuentes, and Mario Vargas Llosa); rather he is one of those "writers who begin working when life equips them for it, with tools not so much freely chosen as determined by their conditions" (*The Fox from Up Above* 21;

translation modified). He writes, in short, as what Deleuze and Félix Guattari term a “machine-man, and an experimental man (who thereby ceases to be a man in order to become an ape or a beetle, or a dog, or mouse, a becoming-animal, a becoming-inhuman, since it is actually through voice and through sound and through style that one becomes an animal, and certainly through the force of sobriety)” (*Kafka* 7). In Arguedas’s own case, his becoming-animal includes a becoming-fox, and his becoming-inhuman is also a becoming-demon, between and beyond the twin languages of Spanish and Quechua. As he says in his speech accepting the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega prize: “I am not an acculturated man; I am a Peruvian who, like a happy demon, proudly speaks in Christian and in Indian, in Spanish and Quechua” (269; translation modified). And it is in this famous declaration that we also see a key to the functioning of the Arguedasmachine, its (literally) moving parts, its raw materials, its motive force, and the operations it performs. For despite everything, in this text that its author stipulated should serve as *The Fox from Up Above*’s preface (though the English translation, following the first Spanish edition, reproduces it as a postscript), Arguedas declares that he is a “happy demon” [*un demonio feliz*]. It is in the space and the slippage between depression and happiness, sorrow and joy, that the Arguedasmachine operates. This is a machine that works on affect, and on the gradient or transition between affective states.

Affect is both foreground and background, front and center as well as hidden in the most recondite extremity, throughout Arguedas’s work. Take for instance his short stories, which are on the face of it the most purely indigenist and most purely naturalist of all his oeuvre. Indeed, the amount of attention that has been paid to one, late, story in particular, “La agonía de Rasu Ñiti,” is surely due to the fact that it is one of Arguedas’s very few texts that can at all convincingly be shoe-horned into a more or less conventional indigenist critical frame. But this is precisely a tale of the machinic transformation of affect. It concerns a traditional scissor dancer on his deathbed. The highland (specifically, Ayacuchan) scissor dance is, as its name suggests, an irreducibly hybrid performance--almost as much as that other ritual to which Arguedas endlessly returns, the “yawar fiesta” (or “festival of blood”) in which a condor is tied to the back of a bull in celebrations tied to Peru’s day of independence. But whereas the “yawar fiesta” brings together principally the Hispanic and the telluric (the bull) with the Inca and the ethereal (the condor), the scissor dance is above all a meeting of man with

eminently modern technology. Scissor dancers perform either with actual scissors or, as Martin Lienhard reports, two oversize rods of iron or steel in the form of a pair of scissors. Lienhard goes on to say that the dancer's use of these strange instruments "may have been a parodic representation of the arrogant Spaniard." So while the dancers also "represent the *wamanis*--the mountains in so far as they are 'divinities' and forces that dispense water for the farmers' fields" (*Cultura andina* 137), the use of these iron implements immediately conjures up the iron that, in the words of the fox from down below, "belches forth smoke and a little blood, making the brain burn, and the testicle too" (*The Fox from Up Above* 26). The scissors are an instrument of domestic labor, a sign of decadent Spanish fashion and (like Diego's frockcoat) fashionable modernity, as well as a weapon, a threat of castration, a neutering that could threaten continued biological and cultural reproduction. The scissors are a machine that is, literally, double-edged.

And the scissors are double-edged, too, in the sense that they join as well as cut. The scissors only function in so far as two elements come together; they cut only in that the two blades join. Every rupture, therefore, is equally a new conjunction or conjugation of forces uniting. Just as with the fishmeal factory's centrifuges, separation also implies mixing, packing together, creating new combinations and new continuities. The importance of such conjugations and continuities is apparent in "La agonía de Rasu Ñiti," on at least two axes. First, the dancer is himself the point of an intersection at which the natural, the divine, the human, and the industrial meet. He constitutes something like a conveyor, a means of transmission, between the *wamani* and the scissors. As his wife says to their daughter: "It's not your father's fingers that are working the scissors. It's the *wamani* that brings them into contact. All your father does is obey" (475). The scissor dance channels energy from above to below; it is a power line, the dancer merely a transformer, converting energy from one form (the natural, divine) into another (the mechanical, but also aesthetic). In this transformative relay of energy, the dancer's scissors are like the harpist's "steel fingernail" that causes "the wire and gut strings to explode into sound" (476). Here it is wire, steel, animal gut, and the harpist's hands that come together to produce the music accompanying and motivating the dance. But second, the dance is also a vital communicating vessel across another axis, the historical and communal. For the dancer's role is pre-eminently social, "lighting up festivities in hundreds of villages" (474). And in this story he is passing on

this power to a new generation. Rasu Ñiti dances his death agony--each component element of his body, first one leg, then another, then his arms, seizing up--only for his role to be taken over by the young dancer in waiting, Atok' sayku. The old dancer lies on the floor, slowly paralyzed until his eyes alone reveal any trace of life and movement, but the young inheritor picks up the scissors and continues the dance: "It was him, father Rasu Ñiti, reborn, his sinews those of a gentle beast, imbued with fire from the *wamani*, whose centuries-old current continued to vibrate through him" (480). Finally, Rasu Ñiti's eldest daughter can shout out "He's not dead! Because it's him! Dancing!" (480). At stake, as the man's vital powers ebb away, as he hovers between death and life, is now what in very similar circumstances Deleuze terms "a life of pure immanence, neutral, beyond good and evil. [. . .] an immanent life carrying with it the events or singularities that are merely actualized in subjects and objects" ("Immanence: A Life" 29). And this life, indefinite and unqualified by the separation between subject and object, is characterized by a pure affect: "something soft and sweet" ("Immanence: A Life" 28); "pure power and even bliss" (30); for Arguedas, again the "*yawar mayu*," the river as a flood of blood that carries all before it but is also the "final step that is a feature of every indigenous dance" ("La agonía de Rasu Ñiti" 478).

Arguedas's stories all work to uncover this immanent vitality that vibrates or hovers at the border between life and death, this immanent affect that suffuses the Peruvian landscape but always (as with Don Diego's dance) with cosmic resonance. Vibration is everything. What counts is variation, the continuous variation that enables the machinic apparatus (the dance, the Inca walls in *Deep Rivers*, Arguedas's own writing) to function. He therefore provides an affective topography of the highlands, and is concerned above all with gradients or folds, with charting the more or less sudden switches between different affective states: from sadness to happiness, fear to pride, cowardice to bravery, and so on. Nature, human structures, groups, and individuals all variously affect and are affected. And in the contagion or influence that connects these different bodies, then the distinctions between these different categories (the human and the divine, for instance) come to seem less important than ever. So, in "Los escoleros," the narrator recounts that "the whole world seemed at peace. [. . .] The freshness of the morning and the happiness of the maternal stream consoled me once more" (53-54). Later, as the schoolboys play, "fearing nobody [. . .] we filled the heavens with our happiness" (67); but *vice versa*, equally "during the night, the sky

cleared up a little and the stars happily lit up the village" (61). The distinction between heavens and village, in other words, is less that the former rise up transcendent over the latter than that there are a series of mutual influences and co-implications. All can be imagined as happy, and as mutually infecting or contaminating the other with this happiness. But that infection is immediately energetic. To put it another way: nature and humanity are both affected; and it is in the gradient or productive differentiations between these affective states that an energy is generated that drives what comes to be a machinic apparatus. As the reference to a "maternal stream" implies, some of this emphasis on affects common to geographical features as much as to human individuals can be read in light of the indigenous belief that the hills have personalities and character traits (for instance as deities or *wamanis*). But divinity, especially in Arguedas, is very seldom seen in anthropomorphic terms. So his is not so much a personification or humanization of nature as, by contrast, a recognition of an impersonal, but responsive, vital, substrate that underlies the human and the inhuman alike.

This commonality can be happy, joyous, and vivifying; it can also be threatening, especially when (still in "Los escolares") the narrator, a boy called Juancha, believes that he might literally be absorbed by the large rock, Jatunrami, that in a fit of exuberance he had climbed but from which he finds himself unable to descend: "I lost hope. Truly, Jatunrami did not want to let me go. I felt that at any moment a huge black mouth might open up in Jatunrami's head and that it would swallow me up" (51). It is at this point that Juancha, like Arguedas himself child of a mestizo lawyer, in panicked Peter-like denial insists on his difference: "I'm not for you; I'm son of a white lawyer [. . .] my hair like corn, my eyes are blue; I'm not for you!" (52). Juancha attempts to assert his subjective difference--his identity as categorically distinct from indigenous identity--in the face of an affect that threatens, he feels, almost literally to carry him away. But the irony is that Juancha uses Quechua expressions ("Tayta"; "mak'tillo") and sentence structures in his address, showing the extent of what Angel Rama would term his transculturation, but which we might equally see as the precariousness of any identitarian strictures on or barriers to affect. Nor in any case is it that the *mistis* (whites or mestizos) are absent from this affective landscape. "El vengativo," one of the less characteristic of Arguedas's stories, in that it is in epistolary form and told from the perspective of a "principal," or *misti* member of the governing class, reveals the emotions that course through the veins of the dominant: "how happy man can become

through rage as much as through love" (33); "my heart was engorged with rage" (35). These emotions, running away with him, are transformed into an affect that threatens to undermine precisely the distinction between rational and barbarous, *misti* and indigenous, that the narrator is so intent upon solidifying. Nor is it quite that the indigenous feel only happiness while the principals are defined solely by their rage: the common people ("comuneros") too have learned to hate, if often ineffectively and impotently, while in "Yawar (Fiesta)" (the short story that Arguedas will later develop into the novel *Yawar Fiesta*), the *mistis* soon repent of the rationalizing innovations that they themselves have imposed upon traditional Indian celebrations. As the drunken native bullfighters replace the refined but cowardly imported Spaniard, the *misti* spectators' "hearts jumped with elation. And as they could not resist the force of their contentment, they broke out into nervous applause, shook each others' hands; they congratulated themselves. 'At last!'" (133-134). So it is in these twists and turns, this scarred and unpredictable landscape, these affective dependencies and openings, that much of the interest and motivation of Arguedas's stories reside. They open up, from the very start of Arguedas's writing career, the field of immanence on and within which his narrative machinery is installed. This machinery will then provide the disjunctive syntheses, like the scissor cuts that both divide and join, that constitute the fits and starts, the productivity and the breakdowns, of Arguedas's machine.

machining narrative

If Arguedas's short stories lay out a plane of immanence and continuous variation (and if his letters and, relatedly, the debate found in *La mesa redonda* open up the cracks and fissures in that plane's flows and gradients), it is in the novels that the machinery is most clearly put to work. Take for instance Arguedas's most accomplished novel, *Todas las sangres*, at first sight his realist masterpiece in which he attempts, he claims, to show that "there are no contradictions" within Peruvian society, to demonstrate "that multiplicity of conceptions, at the various levels of detail of a *populous* world" (qtd. Rochabrún, *La mesa redonda* 30; emphasis in original). As a result, at the level of both the particular and the national, Arguedas aims to convince us that "the ancient [indigenous] community can function as the foundation for a modern community" (48). In short, in appearance and perhaps in Arguedas's intention (until he realized the

impossibility of this ambition as he wrote *The Fox from Up Above*), *Todas las sangres* is an epic novel of national integration: Arguedas himself claims that here he has “tried to show everything” (“Primer Encuentro” 525). The book seems to fit fully within Angel Rama’s conception of narrative transculturation as the mediated construction of an organic community uniting the regional, the national, and the continental. Of Arguedas, Rama writes that “his literary work is wholly a demonstration and proof that the fusion of cultures is possible” (203), and argues that his novels’ typical protagonist is “a specific type of mestizo: one whom we could call the pious (as opposed to traitorous) inheritor, who transports his parents from one universe to another, carrying out the internal transmutations necessary to allow them to survive” (201-202). But this is an extraordinary claim. It is hardly relevant to *Yawar Fiesta*, which lacks any central protagonist. It is untrue for *Deep Rivers*, in which the protagonist ends up disobeying his father’s injunction to return to the protection of his oppressive relative, the “old man,” choosing rather to follow a line of flight that takes him off down a canyon then up over the cordillera. It is scarcely more helpful as a reading of *El Sexto*, concerned as it is with solidarity rather than inheritance, and whose narrator finds himself in the universe of a prison system to which his faint nostalgic memories of the highlands are resolutely opposed. Meanwhile, parents and children are quite notably absent from the problematic of *The Fox from Up Above*. Is then Rama’s contention, and indeed perhaps his entire theory of transculturation, based wholly on *Todas las sangres*, the sole instance in Arguedas’s work in which the issue of inheritance plays such a key role?

For *Todas las sangres* opens with a striking scene of disinheritance. An old man and family patriarch, Don Andrés Aragón de Peralta, a large landowner who like Lear has already had his land divided up between his children and subsequently become enraged and unhinged by what he sees as their betrayal, climbs up on the village church’s tower and steps and denounces his sons, Don Fermín and Don Bruno. Excoriating them in front of the entire populace, he declares that they will not inherit what he still has left to give away, which he will instead share out among the common people. He then proceeds home to commit suicide, leaving his curses ringing in the brothers’ ears. But as it happens, and almost by accident, they do inherit one of their father’s possessions: a weapon as symbolic and deadly as the scissors wielded by Rasu Ñiti. Don Bruno catches sight, among the townspeople carrying off the old man’s goods, a young boy of eight who has picked up an antique pistol. Bruno offers to

exchange his own gold watch for the weapon, telling him that “the pistol no longer works. The watch. . .” (30). But before he can even finish his thought, the child has given up the gun, and run off terrified into the distance. Bruno kisses the weapon and puts it into his belt. Later he takes it in to be repaired and cleaned up. “Don Bruno will do something with this weapon,” says the gunsmith to himself. “I’ll have to clean it conscientiously” (52). And indeed, in line with Chekhov’s famous dictum that a pistol hung on the wall in the first act must be fired by the third, in some ways the entire story of the novel becomes that of the semi-submerged destiny of this antique death machine. Again, rupture and continuity, disjunction and synthesis: the weapon is what is passed down to the next generation, but it is an armament that will blow the family even further apart; and it is the pistol that will bring together the various plot lines in the novel’s denouement, but only by putting to an end the narrative that has accreted around its semi-acknowledged, semi-forgotten presence over the book’s preceding 450 pages. Again, then, like the scissors the gun is a moving part at the dead center of a crosshair target uniting two axes--here, familial and social--and a mechanism for the violent transformation of affect, the conversion of one form of energy into another. There is always a machine at or near the center of the narrative in Arguedas’s work: in *Deep Rivers* it is the spinning top or “zumballyu,” for which “all the air must have been filled with its voice, and all the earth, that sandy ground from which it seemed to have sprung” (68); in *El Sexto* it is the guitar that Cámac, the narrator’s cellmate, is making for him and which, like Rasu Ñiti’s scissors, is taken up by his new cellmate upon Cámac’s death (188). In *Todas las sangres*, it is the gun that is the machine, the thread of connection but also the break or the constant threat of a break, that initiates, drives, and then concludes the entire narrative.

What is at stake in *Todas las sangres*--as in almost all of Arguedas’s work--is Peru’s modernity and its modernization. As always, Arguedas is intensely ambivalent about the perils and promises of development. But it is because modernization is his theme that Arguedas refuses to be labeled an indigenist author--“it not true,” he says--in that in his novels “the Indian is just one of many and various characters” (“La novela y el problema de la expresión literaria” 175). Moreover, very often the indigenous characters in his fiction are already somehow hybrid, usually in that they have emigrated from the country to the city and now returned from the highlands. Such is the case in *Yawar fiesta* with the Lima-based members of the “Lucanas Union Center”

who return to their town of origin, Puquio, with a project for political modernization that overlaps with but is also in opposition to the “civilizing” mission taken on by the regional subprefect. And likewise in *Todas las sangres*, the key character of Demestrio Rendón Willka has also been to Lima, where he had been a habitué of a similar metropolitan social club (47), but has returned to the highlands to work as mayordomo for Don Bruno, now (we are told) as an almost fully deculturated “ex-Indian” (49) who, when asked where he is from, first replies “Lima” (34). It is Rendón Willka whom Bruno loans to his brother Fermín, along with five hundred more of the indigenous serfs who are under his feudal command, so that he can oversee the work of tunneling in Fermín’s mine, reaching the ore-bearing seam, and so opening up the region to its precipitate economic exploitation. The Indians, with their almost Stakhanovite communal work ethic, become the multitudinous parts of an earth-moving machine, burrowing deep into the mountain with “gentleness and force” combined (173), all to the sound both of their own singing and Rendón’s repeated affective cry “Wifáááá!” So although Don Fermín’s chief engineer, Hernán Cabrejos, claims that modernization means that “the businessman, who dedicates himself to the company, has to submerge the sentiments that could put the brakes on the line of flight [*que puedan frenar el vuelo*]” (157), he underestimates the extent to which the process is driven by a collective indigenous body constituting an immensely productive affective machinery. Their labor is permeated by affect. Those who observe the way in which the indigenous work, particularly Fermín’s wife Matilde, who is perhaps the single character with whom the reader most identifies, look on with a mixture of horror and astonishment. Matilde sees “a mournful amazement, the saddest thing in the world” in the eyes of the women, which at the same time is transformed and made “almost majestic” by the workers’ chant that “induces not tears but something more infinite. Happily, the song was short, only two verses long” (170). It is an affective labor, in which the individual is dissolved, and which expansively touches upon the infinite, that drives modernization.

The engineer Cabrejos is revealed to be in fact a double agent in the pay of the multinational Wither-Bozart Consortium who seek to buy Don Fermín out cheaply, forcing his hand by denying him the capital that the mining enterprise requires. However, the force of the indigenous machine threatens to overturn these well-laid plans, so Cabrejos has to seek ways to derail their ingenuity and application. He attempts this by playing on a hackneyed notion of indigenous credulity and nature-

worshipping superstition, having a man killed within the mine and framing this murder as a vengeful mountain spirit's intervention. But Rendón Willka and his men easily see through the subterfuge, interpreting the various clues to the truth just like any modern detective, and this attempt to take advantage of native primitiveness falls through, setting up rather Rendón as the one man whom Cabrejos can neither fool nor buy out. Rendón becomes the great obstacle to multinational capital, in so far as in his hybridity he seems to lack an essence that the engineer could pinpoint and target: "what Cabrejos could not see clearly, and this concerned him, was Rendón Willka's thoughts and intentions. Indirectly, cautiously, he had tried to talk to the ex-Indian, but with every word he said, with every question that the 'Indian' answered, the engineer found himself even further in the dark" (82). Even Matilde (again, largely the reader's representative) is befuddled: "I don't know what you are, my man," she says. Her response can only be affective: "I'm afraid of you!" (82). And even as Rendón gradually, over the course of the novel, reconstructs a form of neo-indigeneity, Arguedas himself, in the debate that arose around his book, insists that "Rendón Willka is not indigenous. Rendón Willka doesn't believe in the mountains as gods; he *avails himself* of this belief, to attain a political goal" (qtd Rochabrún, *La mesa redonda* 47; emphasis in original). Again, then, the theme is affect put to work: whether on the hillside beside the mine whose labor he oversees, or in either Bruno or Fermín's ranches, Rendón Willka is calculating the gradients that induce flows of affect and belief that in turn can become productive in the service of a liberating counter-modernity. Once more, *contra* Angel Rama, it is not that Rendón is a faithful son, obedient (if creatively) to his forefathers. Tradition is not at issue. Rather, he is constructing a form of techno-indigenism, a hybrid motor or productive (and collective) machinic assemblage, "a social assemblage of desire" (Deleuze and Guattari 82) for a modernization whose results that are emphatically new, unheralded and manifestly unpredictable.

Any attempt to hold on to tradition, or to some vision of what Mario Vargas Llosa in his book on Arguedas terms an "archaic utopia," is soon revealed to be futile. Indeed, Arguedas's is a world that hardly knows stasis. If anything, in his novels the only continuity is change, an often violent mutability that constantly threatens to obliterate everything in its path. Even in *Yawar Fiesta* where it seems that it is the defense of tradition that is at stake, in that the indigenous *ayllus* battle with both the

local authorities and the returning metropolitanized townspeople to hold their bullfight celebrations the way they had always been held, these same Indians have in fact themselves physically cut the road to the coast that opens up their town to new products, ideas, and politics. Moreover, in the bullfight itself, the various *ayllus* are consistently competing with each other to outdo their rivals in terms of their feats of daring and bravado. Novelty is all. And the bullfight is an exercise in explosive activity--literally so, in that it is fought with dynamite--that resists the enclosures of a sort of cultural primitive accumulation that would set limits and bounds, professionalize and privatize, a celebration that is always expansively open to the outside. Thus also the end of *Todas las sangres*, when Don Bruno finally takes up his inherited weapon, undoes any notion of protective purity that Bruno himself wishes to reserve for "his" Indians. He had earlier exclaimed that "They must never be rich! They must never learn the ambition that would turn them into fools furiously taking each others' eyes out. No ambition at all! They need humility and obedience to Jesus! They need their purity!" (114). But Bruno hardly seems to recognize that a christianized Indian is far from "pure" in any nostalgic sense: the indigenous are always already hybrid, and his lordly protectiveness aims merely to delineate and restrict the forms of hybridity that he sees as acceptable. And in the end it is as though Bruno himself sees that the approaching apocalypse of rampant social transformation is unavoidable, so it might as well do to hurry it along. Taking his revolver, Don Bruno helps seal the unavoidable decline of the class of which he too is a member, the feudal landlords who claim birthright to the indigenous population who reside on their lands. Like some avenging archangel on his white colt (435), he tours the neighboring estates to shoot his fellow lords to death. And "in his eyes [. . .] there was a river of blood; the *yatwar mayu* of which the indigenous spoke." His victim, Don Lucas, "understood. The river was going to break its banks and wash over him more powerfully than the sudden upsurge of the foaming river that passed through the gorge 500 meters beyond his own estate's canefields" (437). And at the conjunction of Don Bruno's wrath as well as the historical conjuncture of feudalism's obsolescence, the revolver that we spotted early on, in the book's first act, operates here in the third as a machine that concentrates these affective flows with what is a literally explosive, fatal violence.

Meanwhile Anto, Don Andrés's faithful retainer, given his own lands in the wake of his master's death, takes on the Wisther-Bozart Consortium's bulldozers by

making of himself a suicide bomber: less man against machine (because the man destroys himself in the act), but two technologies in deadly competition. Machines turn against machines, as in the background, or rather immanently throughout the country from the highlands to the capital, comes the sound of “rushing torrents shaking the ground deep below, as though the mountains were starting to get up and walk” (455). Rendón Willka himself seems to accept, even revel in, this destruction: he is put to death by firing squad (for his alleged Communism) just as, it is said, he was “beginning upon happiness” (454). But is it not that his happiness comes precisely from his imminent death? From his contact with an affective flow on which the machines had depended, but which now comes to destroy the machines themselves. No wonder that with a “quiet joy” he speaks out: “They can line me up now. It doesn’t matter!” (454). Everyone hears the sound that accompanies Rendón’s death, which is after all simply the occasion for the flow to continue, but in new form: “His blood sparkled in what was still the strong sunlight; alive, it poured from a bullet-hole in his neck” (455). Don Bruno “heard the sound; Don Fermín and Matilde listened to it, fearfully enthusiastic” (456). Everyone hears it, that is, except the shadowy “Czar,” representative of the state, who declares “I hear nothing” (456). Everything happens, in short, behind the back of the state. At best, as in Arguedas’s prison novel, *El Sexto*, the state is an empty shell, within whose structure and despite whose strictures life and death, love and hate, joy and sadness circulate through and are circulated by the various assemblages constructed by the individual and collective desires of (in the case of *El Sexto*) political parties and common prisoners, loose alliances that form sometimes symbiotic, sometimes competing, productive apparatuses.

conclusion: breakdown

Breakdown. The machines only work by breaking down, or breaking up (dividing, mixing, separating, compacting, joining, cutting), the affective flow unleashed in the harsh gradients of Andean Peru, sliding down towards the sea. The machinery must stop and start, stop and start, renewing and reinvigorating its forces as it manages and molds--narrates--the affect that is the very substance of Arguedas’s fiction. Arguedas’s own highs and lows, his breakdowns and epiphanies, are detailed in his correspondence and finally come to light plainly in *The Fox from Up Above*. But they had

always been there, subterranean perhaps, driving the Arguedasmachine that enables his fiction. This techno-indigenist narrative of flows and caesurae, where the only continuity is change (and the only stakes are the rate and violence of that change) comes to its head in *The Fox from Up Above*. And it has little or nothing to do with the kind of defense of Andean mysticism that Arguedas's readers all too often see in his work; nor even with any utopia of a new organic community. Rather, it is a question of machining an affective flow. And though, like Rendón Willka, Arguedas is usually prepared (quite literally) to go with this flow--of *Todas las sangres*, he will say "there, in that novel, the Andean *yawar mayu* conquers, and it conquers completely. It is my own victory" (*The Fox from Up Above* 83)--in his last novel is crystallized the "real panic," like Juancha's panic on the rock, that "the writing machine will turn against the mechanic" (Deleuze and Guattari 33). For Arguedas's breakdowns, coterminous with his machinism, had been a long time coming. And the ambivalence was surely always there, even in *Todas las sangres*, even in "La agonía de Rasu Ñiti." What kind of line of flight escapes in and from Arguedas's writing? Is it the limpid, liberatory transparency of Don Diego's epiphany at the heart of the fishmeal factory? The ecstasy of "a life" in Rasu Ñiti's final moments? Or is it the rather more worrisome incarnation of a death drive that coalesces around Don Bruno's inherited revolver, and which finds its social counterpart or culmination in the purifying rampage undertaken by Sendero Luminoso a decade or so after Arguedas's own suicide? For Sendero, with whom Arguedas's widow became associated, soon promised its followers that they would have to cross their own river of blood, in order to usher in their own alternative modernity.

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