



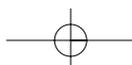
Jon Beasley-Murray*

➤ *Arguedasmachine:* Modernity and Affect in the Andes

Peruvian writer José María Arguedas's final book, an unfinished and posthumously published novel entitled *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, is set in the coastal boomtown of Chimbote during the late 1960s. Rapid industrialization has led to the town being dominated by fish-processing factories belching out smoke, and surrounded by slums in which thousands of recent immigrants from the Andes eke out a living at the margins of this intense capitalist exploitation. The novel's main concern is with these margins, with the slums or *barriadas* in which all of Peru's cultures and languages are thrown together in chaos and misery, if also in vital intercommunication and restless striving. But at the center of the novel is a strange scene of epiphany that takes place at the heart of the industrial enterprise. At the dead of night, a manager, Don Angel, is showing a visitor, Don Diego, around his factory. The two find themselves in the very bowels of this technological beast, which is almost deserted because 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 "inmensos cilindros" that form and separate off caked fishmeal, "la carne y los huesos apretados" (Arguedas 1988: 103) from the liquid broth poured into them. Don Diego and Don Angel pass by the cyclones with some caution, and a sense of danger. The visitor's tailcoat "parecía que iba a ser alcanzada por las llamaradas que se revolvían en el interior de los ciclones". They head towards the centrifuges. Here, Don Angel comments, is the secret at the center of the entire production: what happens to the residue, "el proceso del aceite" that "nadie ha observado" (Arguedas 1988: 103). And it is here that Don Diego experiences his epiphany, a techno-affective rapture of sublime cyborg transformation:

El visitante quedó detenido a pocos pasos de haber entrado. Respiraba no con su pecho sino con el de las ocho máquinas; el ambiente estaba muy iluminado. Don Diego se puso a girar con brazos extendidos; de su nariz empezó a salir una especie de vaho azulado; el brillo de sus zapatos peludos reflejaba todas las luces y compresiones que había en ese interior. Una alegría musical, algo como la de las olas más encrespadas que ruedan de las playas no defendidas por las islas, sin amenazar a nadie, desarrollándose solas, cayendo a la arena en casca-

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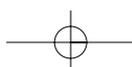
das mas poderosas y felices que las cataratas de los ríos y torrenteras andinas, de esas torrenteras a cuyas orillas delgados penachos de paja florida tiemblan, una alegría así giraba en el cuerpo del visitante, giraba en silencio y por eso mismo don Angel y los muchos obreros que estaban sentados allí, tomando caldo de anchoveta, apoyados en los muros de la galería, sintieron que la fuerza del mundo, tan centrada en la danza y en esas ocho máquinas, les alcanzaba, los hacía transparentes (Arguedas 1988: 103-104).

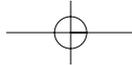
This is an extraordinary scene in many ways, above all for its centrality to the final novel by Latin America's most famous indigenist writer, who is usually read as pitting an Andean spiritual cosmovision squarely against the bleak rationality of Western modernity. In Gonzalo Portocarrero's words: "En el sentir mayoritario, Arguedas se ha convertido en algo así como un santo; un hombre profundamente moral que luchó agónicamente por defender la cultura andina de los embates alienadores de la occidentalización" (2005: 25). And even when Arguedas's political project is not depicted as resolutely anti-Western, it is still portrayed as an effort to reverse the subordination of the traditional to the modern, of the indigenous to the West, or, as Martin Lienhard puts it, a humanized "mundo industrial que esté realmente al servicio del pueblo" (in Cornejo Polar et. al. 1984: 57). But Don Diego's experience in the Chimbote factory is an instance of a rather more complex encounter, in which a sense of spirituality is located within the factory itself and the visitor achieves a symbiosis with both technology and nature that is anything but human. I take this delirious rapture at the heart of the machine as both entry-way and key to the whole of Arguedas's writing.

In this essay, then, I offer another Arguedas from the one presented by the critical canon: an *Arguedasmachine* that "nobody has observed". This *Arguedasmachine* 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. I start with a discussion of *El zorro de arriba*, to outline how its stuttering mechanisms provide insight on the processes informing Arguedas's work as a whole. I go on to argue that even in his early short stories of the 1930s Arguedas is already a "machineman," who depicts highland Peru in terms of affective gradients, as a series of hydraulic reservoirs and overflows of sentiment, whose energies are put to work through immanent mechanisms such as the celebrated scissor dance. I then turn to an analysis of his novels, particularly the epic social realist text *Todas las sangres*, to show how, against the familial (and familiar) thesis of intergenerational transculturation, their plots are driven by some impersonal mechanism (a gun, a guitar) that both manages and is overwhelmed by the affective flows that drive Peruvian modernity. The problem Arguedas raises is at root a problem of engineering: of how best to machine the affect that he invokes. In the end, Arguedas's crisis comes about when he realizes that he has no real solution to this problem; perhaps he doubts that there is one, or fears for the political forces that may harness the torrent in the future. And so in the end the *Arguedasmachine* breaks down by becoming fully immanent to the flows on which it operates.

1. The fox in the machine

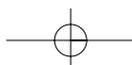
The Don Diego who experiences a midnight-hour epiphany deep in the fish-processing factory is, to say the least, an odd fellow. Upon meeting him, the factory manager





Don Ángel could not help feeling “una curiosidad irresistible y risueña”. For his visitor is “un caballero delgado, de bigotes largos y ralos, cuyos pelos muy separados se estiraban uno a uno, casi horizontalmente” (Arguedas 1988: 75). 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 Ángel 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: “Tú, tú eres un zorro –le dijo el Tarta sin atrancarse– ¿Vienes de arriba de los cerros o del fondo del Totoral de la Calzada?” (75). Stut, a “poeta tartamudo, avaro” (43), is referring to the pre-conquest myth that loosely structures Arguedas’s book: the tale of a millennial dialogue between a fox from up above and a fox from down 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 Pre-Columbian belief transcribed in the sixteenth century and translated from the Quechua by Arguedas himself in 1966 as *Dioses y hombres de Huarochirí*. In the original myth, the foxes meet each to give an account to the other of the situation in their respective domains: “El que vino de abajo preguntó al otro: ‘¿Cómo están los de arriba?’” Upon finishing his account, “El zorro de arriba en seguida preguntó al otro: ‘¿Y los hombres de la zona de abajo están igual?’” (*Dioses y hombres*, 1975: 36, 37). Similarly, in Arguedas’s own novel the two foxes appear briefly to speak their own voices a couple of times, continuing their conversation, “viendo y conociendo” (Arguedas 1988: 29), from this latest transformation in Peru’s age-long history: the country’s heady, unsteady and uneven, industrial modernization. Yet, beyond this distanced role as commentators and observers, with Don Diego’s trip to the factory the foxes seem also to have permeated the social world of Chimbote’s frontier town industrial capitalism.

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” (2000: 312). Julio Ortega hedges his bets somewhat with the use of quotation marks in referring to “the ‘fox’ Don Diego” (2000: xxv), but in fact, some critics quite straightforwardly identify Don Diego with the fox from down below: José Luis Rouillon (1990: 348), for instance. Martín Lienhard (1990a: 115), likewise, writes that Diego is “reconocible como el zorro de abajo” and proceeds with an extensive analysis of the scene on this basis. On the other hand, elsewhere Lienhard identifies Diego with the fox from up above, and Ángel with the fox from down below (1990b: 328). Yet such a simple transcription of Diego as fox is surely reductive. Diego has something of the fox about him. But with his “chaqueta sumamente moderna, larga” (Arguedas 1988: 75) and his silk handkerchief, he is equally recognizable as a Lima dandy, who cares a little too much about his appearance and his clothing, attempting to transcend the provincialism of local fashion: “No es siempre necesario haber estado en el extranjero para presentarse con trajes semejantes a los que están de temporada en las Europa y Norteamérica” (76), he tells Don Ángel. Still, he preserves some ironic distance from these desires nurtured by a burgeoning internal market: “con el gorro este que tengo en la mano, alunitos nos carcajamos de nuestras modernidades. Lo que importa es saber gozar a costa de la harina de pescado” (76). 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

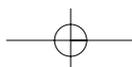




productive machine. And he seduces both Don Ángel and the other factory workers, encouraging them and us to take flight similarly.

“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, we see nature, technology, and humanity collide; as the quotation I began with shows, the land meets the sea, the Andes jut against the Pacific, and the local opens out directly onto the global. Diego himself observes that, in this the world’s largest fishing port at the time, the fish industry is “construyendo en la bahía de Chimbote el Hudson con el Marañón; el Támesis con el Apurímac y una pisquita de París, Sena, Barrio Latino” (76). On the one hand, Chimbote is multiply peripheral: an outpost of peripheral capitalism, a boomtown sprung up on the Peruvian 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 – “Respiraba no con su pecho sino con el de las ocho máquinas [...] se puso a girar con los brazos extendidos; de su nariz empezó a salir una especie de vaho algo azulado [...]” (103) – he conjures up “una alegría musical” 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. Arguedas comments in “Segundo Diario,” one of the various personal diary entries that break the narrative of *El zorro de arriba*, that in his previous novel, *Todas las sangres*, the Andean “yawar mayu”, or river in bloody flood, vence “y vence bien”; he notes, however, “ahora no puedo empalmar el capítulo III de la nueva novela” (71). Chapter three consists of the dialogue between Diego and Ángel. And so 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 *Los ríos profundos*, 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 “la fuerza del mundo”, which makes all around “transparente” (103-104).

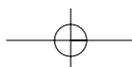
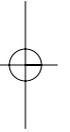
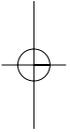
It is fitting that it should be the stammering Stut who later declares that Diego is “un zorro”. For in different ways both Stut and Diego are figures for Arguedas himself in this book. But they are far from the only ones: there is also, for instance, the crazy, barefoot, black preacher, Moncada, and his friend the former miner, Don Esteban. After so much of his previous fiction (notably *Los ríos profundos* 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 – who, as Christian Fernández (2000) argues, are in fact the novel’s true narrators –, and notably also the interspersed diary entries, the prefatory speech, and the appended letters in which Arguedas seems to be speaking in his own anguished voice. The book is therefore 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 in which 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. Then there is the fact that the book remains unfinished. In the book's "¿Ultimo Diario?" Arguedas outlines how he might have continued, and reveals some of the fates he has had in store for individual characters. 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 "un cuerpo medio ciego y deforme pero que acaso sea capaz de andar" (Arguedas 1988: 201). In a postscript to this letter, Arguedas writes: "Obtuve en Chile un revólver calibre 22. Lo he probado. Funciona. Está bien. No será fácil elegir el día, hacerlo" (203). 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. On November 29, 1969, just a day after the date of the novel's final note, Arguedas shoots himself in his university office; he died in hospital three days later. So this is a book in which the author submerges himself, exiting only with his own literal death.

Arguedas's work is almost always read through his biography, and this temptation is all the more appealing when it comes to *El zorro de arriba*, given the book's searingly personal reflections upon its own process of production as well as its author's own mortality, his depression, and his doubled suicide: the failed attempt with which the book opens ("En abril de 1966, hace ya algo más de dos años, intenté suicidarme" [17]) and the successful bid to kill himself that marks the novel's (in)completion ("Les dejo un sobre que contiene los documentos que explican las causas de la decisión que he tomado" [203]). 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: "[...] se arrodilló calmadamente, empezó a toser y arrojó un esputo casi completamente negro. En la superficie de la flema el polvo de carbón se intensificaba a la luz de su aciago color, parecía como aprisionado, se movía, pretendía desprenderse de la flema en que estaba fundido" (110). Esteban has made his sickly body part of a production process, methodically spitting out a mixture that, as with the slop fed into the fishmeal 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 "tragan anchoveta y defecan oro" [100].) 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: "Gramo por gramo andaré hasta que mi pulmón se sane" (115). 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 working on himself just as he once worked at the coalface for five soles a day. Likewise, Arguedas invests his own tortured body and suffering psyche into production; his very mortality is at stake. He writes: "He luchado contra la muerte o creo haber luchado contra la muerte, muy de frente, escribiendo este entrecortado y quejoso relato" (196). Like Esteban, his production is intensely physical, coterminous with his own pain: "Allá voy pues, a como dé lugar, a escribir el capítulo III, con este feroz dolor en la nuca, con



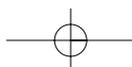


este malestar que la fatiga y el insomnio producen” (73). Writing is intimately associated with Arguedas’s suicidal thoughts (“sólo escribía algo cuando estaba decidido a quitarme la vida de puro inútil y deteriorado” [74]), and yet it is also a means of staving off death, and so, like Esteban’s exhortation, promises a possible cure: “Ayer escribí cuatro páginas. Lo hago por terapéutica, pero sin dejar de pensar en que podrían ser leídas [...] Porque si no escribo y publico, me pego un tiro” (19-23).

Both thanks to and despite this physical struggle, the book advances in stops and starts. And in these pauses and breaks, Arguedas unveils his literary machinery, its breakdowns as well as its functioning parts, and thereby the stuttering mechanism of his work as a whole. In stuttering, the body and language seem to be at odds, but above all the materiality of language, the corporeal effort that it requires, is also revealed. Gilles Deleuze argues 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” (1998: 110). Like the examples Deleuze provides (notably Kafka and Beckett), Arguedas writes in a language other than his native tongue: he had been brought up with Quechua as his first language, only subsequently mastering Spanish. In his early work, notably *Yawar Fiesta* and *El Sexto*, the way in which Arguedas infuses Quechua vocabulary and syntax into Spanish, or tries to conjure up regional dialects of Spanish, threatens to fall into the sentimental portrayal of the rural other typical of *costumbrismo*. This superficial realism (a realism of appearances) was 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 (2000)), in *El zorro de arriba* Arguedas finally abandons all attempts to present either a smooth surface or coherent depth to his fiction. Realism is not his aim: “Y no es que pretenda describir precisamente Chimbote” (73), he tells us. In this final book, in both his “balbuciente diario” (71) and in the narrative chapters that he terms “Hervores” (148), language itself stutters. The complex interrelation between machinic, natural, and human is laid bare. And so the key to what Deleuze and Félix Guattari would call Arguedas’s “minor literature” is finally revealed.

2. 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 “escritores que empiezan a trabajar cuando la vida los apera, con apero no tan libremente elegido sino condicionado” (26). He writes, in short, as what Deleuze and 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)” (1986: 7).





In Arguedas's 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: "Yo no soy un aculturado; yo soy un peruano que orgullosamente, como un demonio feliz habla en cristiano y en indio, en español y en quechua" (Arguedas 1988: 14). In this famous declaration 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 speech that its author stipulated should serve as *El zorro de arriba's* preface (though the English translation, following the first Spanish edition, reproduces it as a postscript), Arguedas declares that he is "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. William Rowe notes that "[u]na característica clave de la narrativa de Arguedas" sería que "por momentos reflexiona a través de la pasión" (in Cornejo Polar et. al. 1984: 42). This affect is also always machinic, and so only vanishingly human. 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 very few of Arguedas's 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 a meeting of man with eminently modern technology. Scissor dancers perform either with actual scissors or, as Lienhard reports, two oversize rods of iron or steel in the form of a pair of scissors. Lienhard goes on to say that the use of these strange instruments "pudo haber sido una representación paródica del arrogante español". So while the dancers also represent "a los wamanis – los cerros en tanto que 'divinidades' y poderes que dispensan el agua para las chacras" (1990a: 137), their iron implements immediately conjure up the iron that, in the words of the fox from down below, "bota humo, sangrecita, hace arder el seso, también el testículo" (Arguedas 1988: 29). 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.

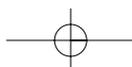
The scissors are double-edged, too, in the sense that they join as well as cut. They function only in so far as two elements come together; they cut only when the two blades join. Every rupture, therefore, is equally a new conjunction or conjugation of forces uniting. Just as with the fishmeal factory's centrifuges, separation also implies mixing, packing together, creating new combinations and new continuities. The importance of such

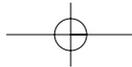




conjugations and continuities is apparent in “La agonía de Rasu Ñiti”, on at least two axes. First, the dancer is himself the point of an intersection at which the natural, the divine, the human, and the industrial meet. He constitutes something like a conveyor belt, a means of transmission, between the *wamani* and the scissors. As his wife says to their daughter: “Las tijeras no son manejadas por los dedos de tu padre. El Wamani las hace chocar. Tu padre sólo está obedeciendo” (Arguedas 2004a: 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 “uña de acero [que] hacía estallar las cuerdas de alambre y de tripa, o las hacía gemir sangre” (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, “era luz en las fiestas de centenares de pueblos” (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: “Era él, el padre ‘Rasu-Ñiti’, renacido, con tendones de bestia tierna y el fuego del Wamani, su corriente de siglos aleutando” (480). Finally, Rasu Ñiti’s eldest daughter can shout out “No ha muerto. ¡El mismo! ¡Bailando!” (480). What emerges, as the man’s vital powers ebb away, as he hovers between death and life, is what in very similar circumstances Deleuze (2001: 29) 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”. And this life, indefinite and unqualified by the separation between subject and object, is characterized by a pure affect: “something soft and sweet”; “pure power and even bliss” (Deleuze 2001: 28, 30). For Arguedas, this affect that overwhelms human form and personal identity is the “yawar mayu”, the river as a flood of blood that carries all before it, and the “paso final que en todas las danzas de indios existe” (Arguedas 2004a: 476).

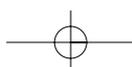
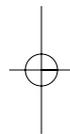
Arguedas’s stories all work to uncover this immanent vitality that vibrates or hovers at the border between life and death, this affect that suffuses the Peruvian landscape but always (as with Don Diego’s dance) with cosmic resonance. Vibration is everything. What counts is variation, the continuous variation that enables the machinic apparatus (the dance, the Inca walls in *Los ríos profundos*, 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, 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: “Todo el mundo parecía contento. [...] El fresco de la mañana, la alegría de la quebrada madre, me consolaban de nuevo” (Arguedas 1983c: 53-54). Later, as the boys of the story’s title play, “sin temor a nada [...] llenábamos el cielo con nuestra alegría” (67); but *vice versa*,





equally “[e]n la noche, el cielo se despejó un poco y las estrellas alumbraron alegres el pueblito” (61). Affect passes from the boys to the heavens, and from the stars back down to the village. Heaven is not transcendent: rather, there are a series of mutual influences and co-implications between up above and down below. Happiness is everywhere, and heavens and village mutually infect or contaminate each 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 the “quebrada madre” implies, some of this emphasis on affects common to geographical features as much as to human individuals stems from 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 and vital, common 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, Jatunrumi, that in a fit of exuberance he had climbed but from which he finds himself unable to descend: “Me desesperé. De verdad Jatunrumi no quería soltarme. Me pareció que de un rato a otro iba a abrirse una boca negra y grande en la cabeza de Jatunrumi y que me iba tragar” (51). In his panic, Juancha, like Arguedas himself the child of a mestizo lawyer, insists on his difference: “[...] yo no soy para ti; hijo de blanco *abugau* [...] mi cabello es como el pelo de las mazorcas, mi ojo es azul; no soy para ti!” (52). Juancha attempts to assert his subjective difference – his categorical distinction from indigeneity – 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 Ángel Rama would term his transculturation, 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: “que tan dichoso puede ser el hombre por el amor como por la rabia”; “mi corazón estaba inmenso de rabia” (Arguedas 1983a: 33, 35). These personal emotions, running away with him, are transformed into an impersonal 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 *principales* are defined solely by their rage: the common people (“comuneros”) too have learned to hate, if often ineffectively and impotently, while in “Yawar (Fiesta)” – a 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’ “corazones saltaban de regocijo. Y como no podían resistir la fuerza de su contento, se palmeaban nerviosamente los unos a los otros, se sacudían del brazo, se felicitaban. –¡Ahora Sí!” (Arguedas 1983: 133-134). It is in these twists and turns, this scarred and



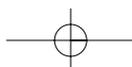


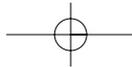
unpredictable landscape, these affective interdependencies and expostulations, that much of the interest and motivation of Arguedas's stories reside. They open up, from the very start of Arguedas's writing career, the field of immanence on and within which his narrative machinery is installed. This machinery 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 machine*.

3. Machining narrative

If Arguedas's short stories lay out a plane of immanence and continuous variation (and if his letters and the debate found in *La mesa redonda* (Rochabrún 2000) 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*, his realist masterpiece in which he attempts, he claims, to show that “no hay contradicciones” within Peruvian society, and to harmonize “esa multiplicidad de concepciones, según los grados de aproximación de un mundo *populoso*” (in Rochabrún 2000: 30; emphasis in original). Arguedas aims to convince us that “[l]a comunidad antigua puede servir de base para una comunidad moderna” (in Rochabrún 2000: 48). In short, in appearance and perhaps in Arguedas's intention, *Todas las sangres* is an epic novel of national integration: Arguedas himself claims that here he has tried “mostrarlo todo” (Arguedas 2004c: 525). The book seems to fit fully within Ángel 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 “[s]u literatura es toda demostración y comprobación de que es posible la fusión de las culturas” (1989: 203), and argues that his novels' typical protagonist is “un determinado tipo de mestizo: aquel que podríamos llamar heredero piadoso (en oposición al renegado), el que transporta a sus padres desde un universo a otro cumpliendo dentro de sí las trasmutaciones necesarias para permitirles la supervivencia” (Rama 1989: 201-202). But this unlikely claim is not borne out by a reading of the novels themselves. For it is hardly relevant to *Yawar Fiesta*, which lacks any central protagonist. It is untrue for *Los ríos profundos*, in which the protagonist ends up disobeying his father's injunction to return to the protection of his oppressive relative, “el viejo”, 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*, a novel concerned with solidarity rather than inheritance, whose narrator finds himself in a prison system to which his faint nostalgic memories of the highlands are resolutely opposed. Meanwhile, parents and children are quite notably absent from *El zorro de arriba*. Is then Rama's contention, and indeed perhaps his entire theory of transculturation, based solely on *Todas las sangres*, the single instance in Arguedas's work in which the issue of inheritance plays such a key role? If so, a reading of that novel in terms of machinic disjunction rather than transgenerational inheritance should show that *a fortiori* the concept of transculturation is all the more inappropriate to the rest of Arguedas's work.

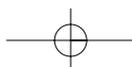
Todas las sangres opens with a striking scene of disinheritance. An old man and family patriarch, Don Andrés Aragón de Peralta, a large landowner who like Lear has already had his land divided up between his children and subsequently become enraged and





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, of 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 "[e]sa pistola ya no funciona, el reloj..." (1987: 30). 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 hará algo con esta arma", says the gunsmith to himself. "Hay que limpiarla con consciencia." (52) And indeed, in line with Chekhov's famous dictum that a pistol that appears 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 *Yawar Fiesta*, it is the automobile that brings the Lima-based exiles and their Spanish matador back to the village in which the action is set; in *Los ríos profundos* it is the spinning top or "zumbayllu", whose effect is that "[t]odo el aire debía de estar henchido de esta voz delgada: y toda la tierra ese piso arenoso del que parecía brotar" (Arguedas 1997: 69); 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 again upon Cámac's death (Arguedas 1974: 188). In *Todas las sangres*, the gun 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.

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 – "no es cierto", he says, in that in his novels "el indio es tan solo uno de los muchos y distintos personajes", all of whom are caught up in as well as protagonists of the modernizing process (Arguedas 2004b: 175). Moreover, 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 "Centro Unión Lucanas" who return to their town of origin, Puquio, with a project for political modernization that overlaps with but is also in counterpoint to the "civilizing" mission taken on by the regional subprefect. Likewise in *Todas las sangres*, the key character of Demetrio Rendón Willka has been to Lima, where he had been a habitué of a similar



metropolitan social club, but has returned to the highlands to work as mayordomo for Don Bruno, now (we are told) as an almost fully deculturated “ex indio” who, when asked where he is from, first replies “Lima”. It is Rendón Willka whom Bruno loans to his brother Fermín, along with five hundred more of the indigenous serfs under his feudal command, to 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 an almost Stakhanovite communal work ethic, become the multitudinous parts of an earth-moving machine, burrowing deep into the mountain with “gentileza” and “fuerza” combined (Arguedas 1987: 173), all to the sound of their own singing and Rendón’s repeated asignifying, affective cry “Wifáááá!” So although Don Fermín’s chief engineer, Hernán Cabrejos, claims that modernization means that “[e]l hombre de negocios, el que se dedica a la empresa, debe ahogar los sentimientos que puedan frenar el vuelo” (157), he underestimates the extent to which this very line of flight is mapped by a collective indigenous body constituting an immensely productive affective machinery. Their labor is permeated by affect. Those who observe the indigenous at work, particularly Fermín’s wife Matilde, who is perhaps the character with whom the reader most identifies, look on with a mixture of horror and astonishment. Matilde sees in the women’s eyes “[un] asombre doliente, el más triste del mundo”, which is transformed and made “casi majestuoso” by the workers’ chant that “[n]o inducía a llorar sino a algo más infinito. Duró muy pocos segundos, solo dos estrofas, felizmente” (170). It is affective labor, in which the individual is dissolved, and which expansively touches upon the infinite, that drives modernization.

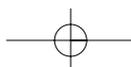
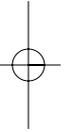
The engineer Cabrejos is revealed to be in fact a double agent in the pay of the multinational Wither-Bozart Consortium who seek to buy Don Fermín out cheaply, forcing his hand by denying him the capital that the mining enterprise requires. But the force of the indigenous machine threatens to overturn these well-laid plans, so Cabrejos seeks to derail their ingenuity and application. He thinks to play on a hackneyed notion of indigenous credulity and nature-worshipping superstition: he has a man killed within the mine and frames 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 Rendón as the one man whom Cabrejos can neither fool nor buy out. Rendón becomes the great obstacle to multinational capital. His hybridity means that he lacks an essence that the engineer could pinpoint and target: “Pero lo que Cabrejos no podía ver con claridad, y esto lo inquietaba, era el pensamiento y las intenciones de Rendón Willka. De manera indirecta y cautelosa había intentado hacer hablar al ex indio y cuantas más palabras decía, cuantas más preguntas contestaba el ‘indio’, más a oscuras se quedaba el ingeniero” (82). Even Matilde (again, largely the reader’s representative) is befuddled: “No sé que eres, hombre”, she says. Her response can only be affective: “¡Te tengo miedo!” (82). And even as Rendón gradually, over the course of the novel, reconstructs a form of neo-indigeneity, which Victor Vich (2005) interprets perceptively as subaltern excess, Arguedas himself insists that “*no es* indio Rendón Willka. Rendón Willka no cree en los dioses montañas; *se vale* de esa creencia para llegar a un fin político” (in Rochabrún 2000: 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* Ángel Rama, it is not that Rendón is a faithful son, obedient (however creatively) to his forefathers. Tradition is not at issue. Rather, Rendón is above all a social engineer, constructing a form of techno-indigenism, a hybrid motor or productive (and collective) machinic assemblage, “a social assemblage of desire” (Deleuze/Guattari 1986: 82) for a modernization whose results are emphatically new, unheralded, and manifestly unpredictable.

Any attempt to hold on to tradition, or to some vision of what Mario Vargas Llosa (1996) claims to be Arguedas’s “utopía arcaica”, is soon revealed to be futile. Indeed, far from indulging in nostalgia for a settled past, Arguedas’s is a world that hardly knows stasis and revels in disruption. If anything, in his novels the only continuity is change, a 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 issue, 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, as it is fought with dynamite – that resists the enclosures of a 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 might wish to reserve for “his” Indians. He had earlier exclaimed: “¡No deben ser ricos jamás! ¡No deben aprender la ambición que los convierta en cernícalos, furiosos por sacarse los ojos, unos a otros! ¡Nada de ambición! ¡La humildad y la obediencia de Jesús! ¡Su pureza!” (Arguedas 1987:114). But Bruno fails 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 he might as well 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 residing on their lands. Like some avenging archangel on his white colt, he tours the neighboring estates to shoot his fellow lords to death. And in his eyes “había un río de sangre; el yawar mayu del que hablaban los indios”. His victim, Don Lucas, understood: “El río iba a desbordarse sobre él con mas poder que una creciente repentina del furibundo río que pasaba por un abismo, quinientos metros abajo de los cañaverales de su hacienda” (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, the patriarch 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 “grandes torrentes que sacudían el subsuelo, como si las montañas empezaron a caminar” (455). Rendón Willka himself seems to accept, even glory in, this destruction: he is put to death by a firing squad (for his alleged Communism) just as, it is said, he was “empezando la alegría” (454). But surely 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 “tranquilo regocijo” he speaks out: “Ya pueden fusilarme. ¡No importa!” (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: “Su sangre brillaba en el sol todavía fuerte; salía vida de un boquete que tenía en el cuello” (455). Don Bruno “oyó [el ruido]; don Fermín y Matilde lo escucharon con temeroso entusiasmo” (456). Everyone hears it, that is, except the shadow “Zar”, representative of the state, who declares: “Yo no escucho nada” (456). Everything happens, in short, behind the back of the state and its ideology of transculturation. 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.

4. Conclusion: breakdown

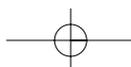
The machines only work by breaking down, or breaking up (dividing, mixing, separating, compacting, joining, cutting), the affective flows unleashed in the harsh gradients of Andean Peru, sliding down towards the sea. The machinery must stop and start, stop and start, renewing and reinvigorating its forces 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 diaries that break up the flow of *El zorro de arriba*. 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 fundamental questions are the rate and violence of that change) comes to its head in *El zorro de arriba*. 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, the problem that Arguedas raises is one of engineering: of how best to machine an affective flow. And though, like Rendón Willka, Arguedas is usually prepared (quite literally) to go with this flow – again, of *Todas las sangres*, he will say: “Allí, en esa novela, vence el yawar mayu andino y vence bien. Es mi propia victoria” (Arguedas 1988: 71) – his last novel crystallizes a “real panic,” like Juancha’s panic on the rock, that “the writing machine will turn against the mechanic” (Deleuze/Guattari 1986: 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", bare and unadorned, 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 historical counterpart or culmination in the purifying rampage undertaken by Sendero Luminoso a decade or so after Arguedas's suicide? For Sendero, with whom Arguedas's widow became associated, promised its followers that they would have to cross their own river of blood, in order to usher in their own counter-modernity.

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