

*What would happiness be that is not measured
by an immeasurable grief at what is!*
—Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*

SIX The End of Magical Realism:
José María Arguedas's Passionate Signifier

Transculturation: The Implosion of Meaning

Magical realism developed in the first half of the twentieth century as a result of the cultural fights within the Latin American intellectual public sphere—Angel Rama's "ciudad letrada"—between the centripetal forces of regionalism/nationalism and the centrifugal forces of the artistic avant-garde.¹ What James Clifford has called "ethnographic surrealism," a project largely associated with a certain French avant-garde that came programmatically together in the College de Sociologie (Michel Leiris, Georges Bataille, Roger Caillois, and Pierre Klossowski were some of the people involved), joins a Latin American cultural-political will to difference to produce in the first works of Aimé Césaire, Miguel Ángel Asturias, and Alejo Carpentier the inception of that Latin American semiotic practice.²

But perhaps ethnographic surrealism and political will to cultural difference are not sufficient to define such a complicated phenomenon. At its base, in the social body that originates magical-real objects, a disparity among two or more modes of economic production is always present. As Michael Taussig puts it, referring to a felicitous expression by Ernst Bloch, "the nonsynchronous contradiction comes to life where qualitative changes in a society's mode of production animate images of the past in the hope of a better future" (*Shamanism* 166).³ Irleamar Chiampi argues that magical realism is

a writing of nondisjunction, in the sense that in it the nonsynchronous contradiction wants to find mediation, and therefore to disappear as contradiction (*O realismo* 134). As a writing of nondisjunction, following on the Cuban José Lezama Lima's vision of Latin America as "incorporative protoplasm," magical realism endorses the ideologeme that names Latin America as a site of transculturation: not just a melting pot of races and cultures but also a region of radical assimilation where difference does not operate according to conventional, Aristotelian logic. The principle of the contradiction of opposites (be they opposite rationalities) or its corollary the *tertio excluso* is not operative for Latin American culture. Magical realism allows, as it were, for the simultaneous textualization of both A and non-A without scandal. The conciliation of the disjointed, according to Chiampi, is the textual effect in which magical realism comes to constitute itself as such. I will take a different position, perhaps opposite, to claim that magical realism is radically or primarily a writing of disjunction—regardless of what it itself purports to be.

Magical realism is a technical device within a larger and more encompassing apparatus of transculturating representation. There are two main uses of the word *transculturation*: in a loosely anthropological sense, it is used to describe any kind of cultural mixing (some acquisition, some loss, and some creation are always ingredients in it). And then it is used to refer to a critical concept, that is, an active, self-conscious cultural combination that is a tool for aesthetic or critical production. In the sense developed by Angel Rama from Fernando Ortiz' first use of the term, literary transculturation is a "revitalized examination of local traditions, which had become sclerotic, in order to find formulations that would allow for the absorption of external influences. External influences would thus be diluted into larger artistic structures that can still translate the problematics and the peculiar flavors they had continued to preserve" (Rama, "Procesos" 207; my trans., here and below).⁴ Transculturation is thus a form of "cultural plasticity," an active receptivity that regulates "the incorporation of new elements . . . through the total rearticulation of the regional cultural structure" (208). In Rama's use, literary transculturation is a form for the promotion of cultural survival undertaken as a reactive response to modernization. As Rama puts it, it comes to strengthen and coconstitute the contemporary

“Latin American literary system, understood as a field of integration and mediation, and with enough leeway for self-regulation” (217).

In Rama’s definition, transculturation has come to fulfill a foundational role for contemporary Latin American cultural critique. As a foundational notion, transculturation is and is not a return to Latin American cultural origins. It is not a return because, as Silvia Spitta argues, post-Ortiz transculturators—the kind of people Rama wrote about in his own book on transculturation—“open the door to a radical rewriting of the tradition” (Spitta, *Between Two Waters* 10). But it is a return because, once that rewriting is done, it would finally be established that transculturation is indeed at the traumatic source of everything that is literary and not-so-literary in Latin America: in other words, at the teleological end of the transculturating process, the technical, critical, or literary use of transculturation would revert to its anthropological use, now understood as infinitely accomplished.

If the critical insistence on transculturation is meant to counter the colonialist “whitening” of Latin American culture against which Ortiz warned, the task at hand for transculturation analysts is to further Ortiz’ enterprise by “reinterpreting” and “reconstructing” the tradition so that the transculturated Latin American subject can survive within a full, and fully known, representational genealogy. In Rama’s work, the political epistemics of transculturation go beyond the description or the incorporation of a given state of affairs into a willed critical interference with its very conditions of possibility: in other words, literary transculturation (and, for that matter, transculturation in the extended anthropological sense) is not simply a response to modernization, understood as an “external influence”; but it is necessarily also a critical relationship to modernization. Literary transculturation is oriented transculturation.

Such critical relationship, however, has some limitations, which Rama may not have fully seen. Transculturation analysts must realize, following the very logic of their practice, that transculturation, as oriented transculturation, is in itself always already transculturated, that is, that transculturation, in their sense, does not name a “natural” or primary fact, but that it is itself an *engaged* representation, that it does not simply refer to a social relation but rather is “itself a social relation, linked to the group understandings, status, hierarchies, resistances and conflicts that exist in other spheres of

the culture in which it circulates" (Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions* 6). As a hermeneutic concept, transculturation is as historically produced as the phenomena it would seek to interpret. To that extent there is no such thing as a stable or accomplished "reinterpretation" or "reconstruction" or a proper genealogy of the transculturated subject. The possibility that a full Latin American subject in its complex historicity can emerge or be constituted, even at the level of literary representation, through more or less exhaustive analysis or critique is simply not given—and it wouldn't be given even if we replace, as indeed we should, the notion of *a* Latin American historical subject by a sufficient plurality of them: subjects. There is no transparency in transculturation, which means that literary transculturation, as oriented, is simultaneously always beyond control, always outside its function as a technical device for the integration of external influences into an enterprise of cultural preservation and renewal. This latter sense is, however, the sense in which Rama for the most part theorizes it.

Transculturation, as a genealogical critical apparatus for a certain cultural and historical expression, will have extreme difficulty protecting itself from the history it attempts to critique or vanquish for the sake of the history it attempts to preserve in mediated form, because both histories, and not just the latter, are simultaneously part of its own constitution: transculturation cannot step outside of itself to establish clear-cut "objective" or disengaged distinctions. As a radical concept, insofar as it is oriented toward a possible restitution, preservation, or renewal of cultural origins, and not toward a mere phenomenology of culture, transculturation runs into the theoretical wall that marks its conditions of possibility as heterogeneous with respect to itself: the critical concept of transculturation, paradoxically enough, seems to originate not in the anthropological concept but rather in a different, nontransculturated realm of (unexamined) truth: the realm of ideology. There is no critical transculturation without an end or a limit of transculturation, through which end the critical concept of transculturation appears as something other than or beyond what it is purported to be—and it is precisely that "end" or excess in the self-conscious use of transculturation that interests me here. Without its explicit critique, transculturation loses its edge and is good, at best, as a concept for factual analysis.⁵

Although Rama is quite aware of the difference between literary and anthropological transculturation, transculturation for him is still something “to be accomplished” rather than something that simply happens. In that sense he thought of Arguedas’s work as “a reduced model for transculturation, where one could show and prove the eventuality of its actualization, so that if it was possible in literature it was also possible in the rest of the culture” (Rama, “Arguedas” 15; my trans. here and below). All of this of course depends on Rama’s notion of transculturation as necessarily “successful” transculturation, that is, a transculturation where the dominated culture is able to register or inscribe itself into the dominant. That an inscription into the dominant culture as such may be considered to constitute a success (and the noninscription therefore a failure) implies a strong ideological positioning concerning transculturation as an everyday anthropological phenomenon: in fact, it ultimately implies the acceptance of modernization as ideological truth and world destiny. For Rama (and not only for Rama), transculturation is therefore always excessive with respect to itself, and it always already incorporates a certain goal. It is obvious that such a goal may or may not be shared by other subjects of transculturation, who may have different goals or may be blind to their goals or may not have a goal. But if they do not have a goal, they are not transculturators in the critical sense but only in the anthropological sense.

I will explore the excess of transculturation in two complementary ways: on the one hand, the end of critical transculturation will be understood as a historical self-submitting to Eurocentric modernity; on the other hand, that same end of transculturation will also be understood as an opening toward an aporetic of meaning. Once the second sense is realized, however, transculturation comes to the end of itself and must mutate into alternative forms of confronting the materiality of history and its cultural precipitate. As oriented, in other words, transculturation necessarily reaches a final de-orientation. My contention is that only the de-orientated use of transculturation has the potential for critiquing empire — whereas its oriented use falls right into its ideological articulations.

In his foreword to the English translation of Néstor García Canclini’s *Culturas híbridas*, Renato Rosaldo remarks that there is always a conceptual polarity involved in the critical concept of cultural hybridity: “hybridity can imply a space betwixt and between

two zones of purity in a manner that follows biological usage that distinguishes two discrete species and the hybrid pseudospecies that results from their combination. . . . hybridity can [also] be understood as the ongoing condition of all human cultures, which contain no zones of purity because they undergo continuous processes of transculturation" (xv). The concept of transculturation is naturally entangled in the same unresolved and ultimately unresolvable polarity. The militant or critical version of literary transculturation on one hand must posit both a (utopian) zero degree and a full degree of transculturation, a point of origin and a goal, which are always and equally unreachable but without which transculturation would find itself deprived of a teleological reason for its own practice. The phenomenological usage of transculturation, on the other hand, can survive safely within the second term of the polarity, which ultimately makes it redundant or merely tautological, in the sense that if everything is transculturation then the concept itself has no particular critical validity. The conditions of possibility of critical transculturation, to the very extent that they refer back to or ground themselves in the anthropological notion as their natural ground, are therefore aporetic, because the critical concept is only made possible by the invocation of a reason for transculturation that is itself beyond the reach of transculturation: transculturation is always already transculturated. The way out of the aporetic conflict is of course always pragmatic: the end, or the limit, of every transculturating practice or analysis determines in every case its specific relevance as a hermeneutic tool. But that is no excuse to stop reflecting on the theoretical difficulty.

In Spitta's definition, "the transculturated subject is someone who, like [José María] Arguedas, is consciously or unconsciously situated between at least two worlds, two cultures, two languages, and two definitions of subjectivity, and who constantly mediates between them all." Transculturation would then organize that "ambivalent and indeterminate space" (24) where the transculturating artist or critic would be free to give herself over to the task of, in Rama's words, "recomposing from [previous cultural] material a superior discourse that could match or confront the most hierarchic products of a universal literature" ("Procesos" 228). Perhaps our historical times, different from Rama's, no longer advise or enable us to be so relentlessly enthusiastic in the evaluation of the cultural power

of the world's semiperiphery—at least not in the sense invoked by Rama. The celebratory or heroic telos of oriented transculturation cannot respond to a rather simple question: What if that indeterminate space of in-betweenness should prove to be not the purveyor of a new historical coherence but rather a mestizo space of incoherence, in the definition of Claudio Lomnitz-Adler? “Mestizaje is the process wherein communities are extracted from their cultures of origin without being assimilated into the dominant culture. This is a process that entails fracturing the coherence of a subordinate . . . culture. It also entails undermining the conditions for the creation of a new, independent, coherent culture” (*Exits* 39). Hasn't transculturation theory assumed for too long that meaning is always already available, always already to be either found or produced? Such an insistence comes at the price of a certain foreclosure. What if transculturation were shown to be not a path to meaning but rather a path into the implosion of meaning? In other words, what if a given transculturating practice turned toward the site of its aporetic impossibility and not toward its possibility? It is merely a matter of emphasis, perhaps, but with rather portentous implications. Rama preferred to dwell on an optimistic or celebratory possibility, understanding the end of transculturation as the “ample overcoming of modernization” from a Latin American or regional perspective (“Procesos” 215), and perhaps that is what he had to do. It may now be time to examine the opposite or sinister side of transculturation. The thesis I propose is that critical transculturation, once it goes to the end of itself and explores, as it is wont to do through its own logic, its own excess with respect to itself, can no longer go on and so suffers collapse. Arguedas has given us perhaps the paradigmatic example in the Latin American tradition of this final transculturation of transculturation—its overturning, which comes to be, in the final analysis, its ownmost theoretical possibility.

Arguedas's dramatic staging of the implosion of meaning in transculturation takes place in his last, posthumously published novel, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (1971). Roland Forgues has succinctly expressed the major theoretical conflict with which Arguedas was forced to deal in the writing of *El zorro*: “On observing the deep mutation suffered by Chimbote's society, a mutation that radically questioned the ideas he had previously formed about mestizaje and the social and cultural integration of the Indians and

other marginalized sectors, the writer had to confront the destabilization of what had until then constituted the very foundations of his work" ("Por qué bailan?" 314; my trans.). I plan to draw some of the theoretical and political conclusions for Latin American literary and cultural historiography that the novel not so secretly offers in the working out of that conflict.⁶ The strong optimistic version that Rama offered us of Arguedas's writing obscured the already dark truth Arguedas explores in his last work: a truth that destabilizes not only the alleged foundation of Arguedas's previous writing but, more concretely, the reading that Rama gave us, and with it the dominant version of critical transculturation in Latin American thought.

A Writing of Disappropriation

Jean Franco has argued that several Latin American novels written before *El zorro* but also dealing with "the motif of the dying community or the wake around the body" must be understood as a textualization of the impossibility of construction of the modern Latin American state ("Nation" 206, 205). The writings of Gabriel García Márquez, post-*Zorro* work such as Augusto Roa Bastos's *Yo el Supremo*, and two texts by Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá are also presented by Franco as a representation of the impossibility of a nationalist ideology. Franco's readings are for her a sufficient demonstration that contemporary Latin American literature is not necessarily national-allegorical. In Franco's opinion, however, the fact that those texts do not seem to fall for nationalist state representation should not automatically make them fit the alternative mold of so-called Latin American postmodernism. Resistant to both nationalist narrativization and Latin American postmodernism, Franco prefers to speak of contemporary Latin American symbolic production as "an irrepressible process of appropriation and defiance" where we must detect "a Utopia glimpsed beyond the nightmare of an as yet unfinished modernity" (212).

Franco is engaging in a polemic with Fredric Jameson on the necessarily allegorical import of contemporary third-world literature, and to that extent she chooses her examples carefully.⁷ But *El zorro*, which falls entirely within the purview of Jameson's model while at the same time, in a sense that will be explained later, turning it against itself, is not mentioned in Franco's essay. Would she

also think of it as part of the “irrepressible process of appropriation and defiance” of modernity that she finds in her exemplary Latin American texts? There are solid grounds to do precisely that—grounds offered, for instance, by Martin Lienhard’s and Antonio Cornejo Polar’s splendid research on the Arguedas novel.⁸ However, if it were true, as I will contend, that *El zorro* is a narrative of the end of narrative, it would be reductive to call that writing of writing’s collapse an “appropriation and defiance” of modernity. What else can it then be?

Arguedas’s writing in *El zorro*, which is a work between autobiography and fiction, between the personal and the social, is the expression of an event that does not easily yield to available critical-ideological determinations. If *El zorro*’s fiction, that is, the attempt at realistic representation of the postsymbolic world of Chimbote, can perhaps still be understood as an appropriation and a defiance, as the sort of successful transculturation Rama repeatedly described, the autobiography that simultaneously writes Arguedas’s way toward suicide is *also* a radical disappropriation and *also* a radical defeat, whatever else it may be. Of the two opposing tendencies, appropriation and disappropriation, which one leads and what remains? Which one constitutes the ultimate horizon, or the end, of the novel?

Following Franco Moretti’s argument in *Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to García Márquez*, *El zorro*, like García Márquez’ *Cien años de soledad*, as a “novel of uneven and combined development” (243), is one specific response to the situation that arises when “the pressure of the world-system forces your country into a more complete . . . integration. A thousand and one possibilities then really do become a thousand and one dead ends; the multiplicity of possible developments, a set route. It is the hour of black magic: an ‘incredible’ that is no longer bound to a whirlpool of bizarre combinations, but to the enormity of the crimes committed” (245). Moretti’s reading of *Cien años de soledad* has it that García Márquez’ novel arises in a complicity between “magic and empire,” whereby modern literature’s “rhetoric of innocence” takes its strategy of denial and disavowal one step further, into the heart of the victim. If “the rhetoric of innocence” had been Goethe’s discovery in *Faust*, the means by which the West, while being “most lucid in recognizing the necessity of violence for [its own] civilized life,” simultaneously establishes “the necessity of its disavowal [i.e.,

disavowal of violence] for the West's civilized consciousness" (26), then García Márquez' brand of magical realism subserviently incorporates such a rhetoric into the literary resources of the world-system's semiperiphery. In *Cien años de soledad* "forced modernization [becomes] a story of extraordinary delight" (*Modern Epic* 249). A certain appropriation occurs, a certain transculturation has taken place. But both appropriation and transculturation are purchased at the price of service to historical hegemony: not so much an overcoming of modernization as a submission to it. Submission is the price of transculturation's appropriation. In Moretti's words: "A really strange place, Macondo. A city of madmen, where nobody has anything in common with anybody else. But where *language is the same for everybody*. While you are reading you pay no attention to it—it is all so lovely. But if you reopen the novel with a little detachment, you find that the narrator's impersonal voice covers more or less *ninety five per cent* of the textual space . . . a real triumph of monologism" (245–46).

Moretti's unsettling point is simply that magical realism has historically functioned as an apparatus for the capture of nonsynchronicity, of heterogeneous contemporaneity, through the incorporation of the periphery's "reserves of magic" into a global enterprise of world "re-enchantment" (249), which serves as an ideological justification of the world-system. Its primary technical innovation would be the conflation of the rhetoric of innocence (which uses the periphery's "magic" for an enterprise of disavowal) and the ideology of progress and modernization: "For in magical realism the heterogeneity of historical time is also, for the first time, *narratively interesting*: it produces plot, suspense. It is not just the sign of a complex, stratified history: it is also the symptom of a *history in progress*" (243).

There is therefore a surface agreement between Rama and Franco, on the one hand, and Moretti, on the other, which is only the obverse of a deeper disagreement: if Franco and Rama read the Latin American text as a symptom of "an as yet unfinished modernity," Moretti sees the path to modernization as a relentless dissolution of heterogeneity "according to an ascending genealogy—which will then end by legitimizing the dominion of the 'advanced' West over the 'backward' periphery" (*Modern Epic* 51). Everything may then have to do with our own critical position concerning moderniza-

tion. But is it possible to turn magical realism against itself, or to use it otherwise? What if a Latin American text, such as *El zorro*, had given us the means for understanding a diametrically opposite possibility within magical realism whereby the magical-real apparatus could reveal itself to be not simply a machine of appropriation but its opposite? The critical game would then be to expand our notion of magical realism and make it open itself to a deeper articulation. If the conditions of possibility of magical realism, or of literary transculturation in Rama's sense, are determined by "appropriation and defiance," in Franco's expression, out of a certain temporal heterogeneity or noncontemporaneity of the material, perhaps what we could call the "defiance of disappropriation" *within* magical realism would reveal an altogether different ground for its theoretical definition. In Arguedas's text, as we will see, the double sound of gunpowder and lead, the fatal scar showing up at the end of its writing as sign and signature of the identity between the writer and the text, tragically brings to effect and completion the theoretical moment of the magical real as textual event. But the event is here nonconjunctive: it is rather a fissure in sense, designated by Arguedas with the Quechua word *huayco*, which is an abyss, a precipice. With it, we begin to see *appropriation* as an inadequate concept for understanding what is truly decisive about magical realism as the dominant manifestation of literary transculturation in contemporary Latin American times.

Los zorros, as it is said that Arguedas always referred to what is now known as *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, published in 1971 and long considered a failed, insufficient novel, certainly not one of Arguedas's best and certainly not part of the so-called boom of the Latin American novel, is an epochal text for Latin American culture in which the possibility of a new commemoration, that is, a new reading of both the past and the future traditions of Latin American writing, is given.⁹ I propose to read *from* Arguedas's epochal text (and *in* it) an event of heterogeneity that might alter our understanding of magical realism as a central ideologeme for Latin American cultural self-understanding. I will contend that *Los zorros*, written between 1966 and 1969, closes Latin American magical realism, or, better, reveals that its conditions of possibility are also at the same time its conditions of impossibility. Magical realism after Arguedas, at least where it is not a neocolonialist commercial mystification,

can only begin to repeat Arguedas' gesture, but cannot, structurally speaking, take it any further than Arguedas did, precisely because what Arguedas ultimately did was to undo magical realism and its system of representation. If the very tendency of magical realism is to seek its own undoing (by familiarizing the unfamiliar), the destruction of the possibility of magical realism will be shown to be the moment of its maximum effectiveness. Could the same be said about transculturation?

Incalculable Loss

Cornejo Polar's theory of literary heterogeneity in Latin America, in which I read disjunction as the inescapable dimension of cultural encounter within the Latin American literary artifact, has been largely disattended.¹⁰ The Latin American critical establishment, in the wake of the boom years and still totally possessed by the mirage of cultural presence in the global market, preferred to follow a simplified version of Rama's ideas on transculturation, which form more or less the hegemonic if often unstated paradigm for critical reflection on Latin American literature.¹¹ Transculturation—that is, the macroprocess of translation by which elements of one culture are naturalized in another culture, although not without undergoing some changes during the process—of course insists on conciliation, conjunction, and dialectical unification of the global cultural field. It is a productive model, but it is also a model that must work and even feed on the systematic erasure of what does not fit into it. And this Rama knew well.

In Rama's historical analysis, the group of narrators he calls "transculturators" (fundamentally, Juan Rulfo, João Guimarães Rosa, José María Arguedas, and Gabriel García Márquez) constitutes a particular form of response to the crisis of accelerated modernization and integration into the world-system that Moretti also referred to. In this specific historical sense, transculturation retains, from the previously dominant paradigm of regionalist or *criollista* writing, the need for "the conservation of those elements from the past which had contributed to cultural singularization" and tries to "transmit them to the future as a way of preserving acquired formations" ("Procesos" 205). But this kind of conditioned preservation comes at a price.

Transculturation is a war machine, feeding on cultural difference,

whose principal function is the reduction of the possibility of radical cultural heterogeneity. Transculturation is a part of the ideology of cultural productionism, indeed a systemic part of a Western metaphysics of production, which still retains a strong colonizing grip on the cultural field. Arguedas's destruction of magical realism as a conjunctive or mediating possibility is a gesture against transculturation. By returning heterogeneity to where it belongs, Arguedas unmasks the reconciling tactics of transculturation as cure or "appropriation and defiance." In a brief but important speech delivered in October 1968 at the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega Award ceremony, Arguedas said: "I am not acculturated, I am a Peruvian who proudly, like a happy demon, speaks Christian and Indian, Spanish and Quechua" (my trans., here and below).¹² For Arguedas, transculturation could not be more than a remedial step taken after acculturation has sadly happened. And he has strong words for acculturation: "a vanquished nation giving up her soul . . . and taking up the soul of the victors" (*Zorro* 257). Arguedas's demon is the uncanny will to speak two languages, to live in two cultures, to feel with two souls: a doubled demon, a demon of doubling, perhaps happy but also mischievous, as we shall see. In his affirmation of doubledness, Arguedas makes manifest his forceful rejection of the ideology of cultural conciliation, indeed stating his final conviction that, at the cultural level, there can be no conciliation without forced subordination. Arguedas was writing his last novel at the time of the Garcilaso Award ceremony. He knew then that everything was at stake in his bitter attempt to confront the experiential problematics that had always been at the core of his writing. He also knew that his previous attempts were no longer of any use: he was approaching a dangerous edge where theory, and life, started to taste uncannily like lead.

Los zorros is apparently only the presentation of life in a new industrial center of the Peruvian Pacific Coast. In Chimbote a huge industrial conglomerate developed during the 1960s, whose main purpose was to process the bountiful fish of the South American Pacific into fishmeal for agricultural and other purposes. Before this happened, Chimbote was only an isolated Peruvian beach. During the fishmeal boom years it grew, through massive immigration, into a city many tens of thousands of people strong, most of whom were relatively recently proletarianized peasants. The sociocultural con-

flicts that immediately originated fascinated and horrified Arguedas, who came to see Chimbote as the apotheosis of the Andean future. For Arguedas, at this point, a drastically urgent if perhaps already desperate task lay at hand: to reappropriate, to resymbolize, life in Chimbote into a possible utopia, the only hope for the future. The magical-real machine was then emblematically in place—or apparently so. But in that limit-situation transculturation could only happen as a failure of transculturation—through the failure itself.

Arguedas's presentation of the Chimbote universe is thoroughly demonized in two specific and thoroughly diverse ways. The first is in the forceful interpolation within the text of diary fragments in which Arguedas repeatedly manifests his intention to kill himself unless the novel somehow saves him. The second is by means of the conventional repertoire of the magical real represented by the enigmatic and defamiliarizing presence of the two foxes: the fox from down below and the fox from up above, obviously two *huacas*, as is said in Quechua, two demons or minor deities who make a brief but significant appearance in the sixteenth-century Andean Huarochirí chronicle, from where Arguedas takes them. Descriptions of actual life situations that Arguedas witnessed in his research trips to Chimbote alternate in the novel with magical-real moments in which the conflict of cultures is violently thematized, and these both are interspersed with self-reflective moments in which characters talk with calm or despair about their predicament.

Both Arguedas's text and the very location of the text, Chimbote, the beach where Peru finally meets transnational capitalism, are presented as holes of the real, dark pools or dark wounds of the world, where a world catastrophe is happening.¹³ The wealthy capitalist Braschi and the other fishmeal entrepreneurs (who are not merely, the text says, mealmakers but also madmakers, because they produce madness) have taken things "hasta donde no hay sol ni luna" ("to where there is neither sun nor moon"; *Zorro* 116; my trans., here and below). They have, that is, impossibly taken things even beyond the realm of the black sun, there where, as Freud puts it, the shadow of the object has fallen on the subject.¹⁴ In Chimbote, in Arguedas's textual hell, where even the notion of shadow has vanished because everything is a shadow, melancholy is an optimistic delusion, a welcome relief from the overwhelming, always pending, psychotic collapse. *Los zorros* is a text written in the fold of a death

wish whose most intimate sense, explicit in the diaries, may have been to ward off a psychotic collapse that would have had more than personal implications. It is here where the two dimensions of the novel, the fictional-ethnographic and the autobiographical or autothanatographical, come together seamlessly.¹⁵ Arguedas's narcissistic psychosis finds its world-catastrophic symbol in Chimbote. That is why Chimbote, in Arguedas's representation, is a postsymbolic world where conciliation has yielded to renunciation: a limit world where Arguedas wants to fight the losing battle of resignification.

Arguedas's last word on the possibility of resignification, as we will see, comes to us not through magical-real demonization but through its other side: through suicide as transculturation's end. It is suicide that reads the magical real. The fact that it does not happen the other way around is of course crucial not just for the history of Latin American literature but also for the theoretical understanding of the limits of transculturation. Arguedas's suicide must be read not as the end of the novel, but necessarily as the novel's own end.¹⁶ In a letter the definitive redaction of which takes place on the November 5, 1969, after Arguedas has already made a final decision concerning his death, he says: "I will not survive the book. Since I am sure that my abilities and weapons as a creator . . . have weakened to near-nullity and I only have left those who would reduce me to the condition of an impotent and passive spectator of the formidable struggle that Humanity is carrying on in Peru and everywhere, it would not be possible for me to tolerate such a fate" (*Zorro* 250).

This "formidable struggle," which is not just a struggle of the Quechua people and not only a Peruvian struggle but humanity's own struggle, is the struggle for the new beginning in which Arguedas had attempted to believe, which he had attempted to bring into existence, his whole life. Another epistolary text, which, like the one just cited, is also incorporated in the novel as such, is even clearer: "Perhaps with me a cycle is beginning to close and another one is opening up in Peru and what Peru represents: the cycle of the comforting lark is closing, of the whipping, the muleteering, the impotent hate, of the funereal uprisings, of the fear of God and the dominance of that God and his protegés, his makers; the cycle of light and of the invincible liberating force of the Vietnam man is opening up, of the fire lark, of the liberating God" (*Zorro* 245-46).¹⁷ Arguedas's new beginning (in which the old Tawantinsuyo notion

of the *pachacutiy* or cosmic cycle is quite active), his belief in the new beginning, which forces him to remove himself once he is no longer strong enough to share in the "bloody struggle of the centuries" (246), dominates the totality of the textual construction of *Los zorros*. At the opening of the novel the foxes are conversing; they tell each other that this is only the second time they have met in twenty-five hundred years, an ominous event (49). Arguedas's madness and suicide are a result of his lifelong struggle to remove himself from a system of reason that constituted itself in and through the exclusion of Quechua peasants from the very possibility of sanity. If Lienhard is right when he says that "in contemporary Quechua poetry" there is an "almost obsessive presence" of Andean messianism, prophecy, and utopianism, if that messianism is always understood to be the announcement of a historical break, and if that break is consistently related to the *pachacutiy* (Lienhard, *Voz* 221), then a work written on the horizon of the break and leading, as *Los zorros* led, to vital exhaustion, cannot just be read as a symptom of personal despair. Rather, Arguedas's personal is political, and his libidinal economy must indeed be read in the context of the difficult, perhaps impossible (re)formation of a national allegory whose necessity, in today's Peru, does not need to be emphasized.¹⁸

Arguedas was born in 1911 in a small village of the Peruvian Andes (Andahuaylas) and his mother died when he was three years old. His father, a traveling judge, was forced to leave his child for long periods of time in the company of Quechua servants. Quechua was therefore his first language, but with it he also necessarily learned his social difference from it, a painful split that would haunt him throughout his professionalization (first as a teacher of Spanish, then as an ethnologist of Quechua culture, and finally as a writer) and his socialist politics, possibly to his death. Roberto González Echevarría, among others, has not hesitated to point out that Arguedas "felt within himself the contradictions and the tragedy inherent in the relationship between anthropology and literature with an intensity that in 1969 led him to choose suicide" (*Myth* 15). For Arguedas, of course, the conflict between anthropology and literature was always something more and something less than a disciplinary conflict; it was also the violently felt conflict between two parts of his soul and the source of a serious narcissistic wound, which he ultimately came to love too passionately, more than life itself.

Can Arguedas's suicide be read as an act of "unwriting" such as the one González Echevarría claims is implied in every modification of the Latin American archive? If, as González Echevarría has argued, anthropology, or an anthropological desire, marked the hegemonic literary paradigm in Latin America in 1969, is *Los zorros* just another instance of that dominance, or, on the contrary, does it announce the end of the anthropological paradigm and in so doing prefigure a reconfiguration of the archive whose break with the previous one goes further than anything yet seen since 1492? Arguedas's unwriting of himself, his self-erasure, which is also, as we shall see, a portentous form of self-inscription, is not too far from matching, all too literally, González Echevarría's notion of archival gaps.¹⁹

Magical realism finds its final theoretical moment, or its abysmal moment, in November 28, 1969. That day José María Arguedas committed suicide in his office at the Agrarian University of La Molina, in Lima. A previous, failed attempt, which had taken place in April 1966 (there had been an earlier one in 1944), is mentioned in the very first line of *Los zorros*: "I attempted to commit suicide . . . in April 1966" (7). *Los zorros* ends with the following words: "Nov. 28, 1969. I choose this day because it won't interfere so much with the functioning of the University. I think the registration period will be over. I might make my friends and the authorities waste Saturday and Sunday, but it [*sic*] belongs to them and not to the U. (J. M. A.)" (255). After writing those words, Arguedas put two bullets through his head, two final affirmations of his will to death. Perhaps unsettlingly, the end of the novel figures them or allegorizes them in those repetitions of the last sentence: a bullet for my friends and a bullet for the authorities; a bullet for Saturday and a bullet for Sunday; a bullet for them; and a bullet for the university. Arguedas is addressing the voices that would still yell at him from the depths of his neurosis, but he is also perhaps calling attention to the fact that two bullets were coming, had come, and not just one: two powerful diacritical marks symbolizing the final identity of the novel and the writer's dead body.

Does this book, which Arguedas's widow, Sybila Arredondo, would publish two years later, end with the prefiguration of those two shots, or does it end with the shots themselves? They are not a final period through his brain but a colon, signing (off) an equivalency between the text that Arguedas left on his office desk and his doubly perforated corpse. *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* will

always have to be read as fantasmalized by the writer's cadaver, given Arguedas's signature effect, given that Arguedas signed the end of the book with two bullets. *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* is really a crypt where the dead body of the writer still lives, an undead writer, an undead author, as every reader who has read in utter perplexity how death silently and inexorably comes Arguedas's way knows very well. The death of the author is here truly inseparable from the novel's very status as an artwork, that is, it can't be read away from it.

Forgues has warned against the possible superficiality of thinking that the apparent inconclusiveness of the narrative "can be a [willed] mode of articulation of the text with History, and that [Arguedas's] suicide would amount to a kind of justification of the open-narrative technique taken to its last consequences" ("Por qué bailan?" 313). I agree that it is not a matter of being reductive or of oversimplifying. At the same time, however, *Los zorros* comes to be absolutely cannibalized by that which constitutes it as a posthumous object: Arguedas's suicide, after all, cannot in any way be understood or even thought of independently of the problems that the text exposes, for the very fact that suicide *is* thematized and presented by Arguedas himself as something that will happen unless the text saves him, while all the time saying that it probably will not. We know, from a letter written on October 31, 1969 to his department chair at the university, that the writing of *Los zorros* is, as Arguedas puts it, "a part of the therapeutic treatment I was told to undergo" after his second attempt at suicide in April 1966 (*Zorro* 295). The novel itself says it over and over again: "It is not disgraceful to fight death by writing. I think the doctors may be right" (19). And, "I have fought against death or I believe to have fought against death by writing this faltering, whining narrative. I had few and weak allies, hesitant; her allies have won. They are strong and they were well sheltered in my own flesh. This unequal narrative is an image of the unequal fight" (243). Writing his text was a fight against death that ended up being a yielding to, and an embrace of, death, as if death were indeed a restful presence.

Understanding how the author's death can also be here the figure of an utopian space of regeneration is of course a task of extraordinary difficulty, but it is one in which the very possibility of a writing of mourning comes to be decided. Edmundo Gómez Mango, in a brilliant and unfortunately brief paper, has acknowledged this with

good critical economy, "Arguedas' novelistic language is never more inebriating and powerful than when he comes to the edge of the *huayco* of his own destruction; it is as if he could only find or invent the plenitude of his writing in the imminence of his own, final, and silent disaster" ("Todas" 367; my trans., here and below). For Gómez Mango *Los zorros* is a writing of the lost object, and it is all the more successful as such, the more the writing is implied in its own catastrophe. "Mourning for the lost object has not been accomplished. The magical rite of writing in order not to die fails in its own victory" (368)—since, I would add, dying is postponed for as long as writing lasts, but no longer. Because the writing in *Los zorros* is a commemoration of an incalculable loss, it can only satisfy itself within a horizon of loss. In this sense Arguedas's death, within the textual context in which we learn of it, is essentially a writing event, an event of writing. But Arguedas's death is also an opting out of writing altogether. In suicide, Arguedas comes to the end of writing. By coming to the end of writing, Arguedas takes writing to its very end, there where it reveals itself as an instrument of signification, precisely because it loses the power to signify. I want to read this fact in the light of the magical-real machine that Arguedas is all the while trying to set into unflinching motion in Chimbote.

A Negative Accomplishment

Los zorros opens up a new cycle of Latin American writing because it closes the possibility of an anthropological writing in González Echevarría's sense, or even in the sense in which Lienhard, one of the leading Arguedas scholars, has theorized what he calls "ethnofiction." It is not that after *Los zorros* ethnofiction or anthropological narrative is no longer possible, but that *Los zorros* offers itself as a decisive text in which the conditions of impossibility of anthropological fiction are shown as such—conditions of impossibility, that is, insofar as we make them depend on epistemological paralysis rather than on ethical or even political grounds. *Los zorros* marks the theoretical end of anthropological ethnofiction because *Los zorros* takes anthropological ethnofiction to a breaking point. At that breaking point, magical realism, as the organizing principle of ethnofiction, is epistemologically shattered because it is revealed to be inexorably dependent upon the subordination of indigenous cul-

tures to an always already Western-hegemonic machine of transculturation: to modernization itself.

Referring to Lienhard's extensive investigation on Quechua elements within the text, Cornejo Polar risks the following statement: "In *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* the Andean components are of such a magnitude and they exert such decisive functions, that it is legitimate to think that in that novel, for the first time, indigenous rationality comes to account for modernity [da razón de la modernidad]" ("Ensayo" 303). That it may indeed be legitimate to think so gives us an idea of the very high, epochal stakes that *Los zorros* had set for itself. We do not need to accept the literal truth of Cornejo Polar's statement in order to accept that such an intentionality had partially orchestrated the writing of the book. The other side of the novel's therapeutic failure is then the gift of a cultural instrument in which, for the first time, as Lienhard and Cornejo Polar underline, the oppressing rationality comes, at least tendentially, to be contained by a form of understanding that cannot be accounted for within its parameters.

What I would consider the epochal fact that *Los zorros* embodies is that such (tendential) upturning of perspectives is necessarily and irrevocably framed in the catastrophic aura of a suicide that absolutely suspends all feelings of victory or of liberation, and thus any possibility of "accomplishment," unless we speak of an accomplishment of "negation" in the same way in which we could speak of a negative theology (which is, by the way, the object of a rather secret but extensive treatment in the book). Let me make it clear: if those two shots at the end of the book, the sinister colon, signal the symbolic identity between *Los zorros* and Arguedas's dead body, then it is undeniable that Arguedas is dead because he paid the price, or at any rate he thought he paid the price, writing imposed on him, and it is undeniable that such a price is literally the impossibility of paying the price. The upturning of the cultural perspective within the book, the substitution of what Forgues calls tragic for dialectical thinking, of Quechua for Spanish rationality: all that drained him and made him suspect that his own personal sacrifice, redundant at that point as it may have been for anybody but Arguedas himself, was essential for the novel to accomplish what it had to accomplish—negatively.

Arguedas's epochal accomplishment was against any and all

transculturation, namely, a text where a nonhegemonic rationality could be thought to account or to give the very principle of reason for modernity itself. I do not think such an accomplishment, on which we will never have reflected enough, can be read over, beyond, or apart from Arguedas's textual, literal, suicide. At the moment when Arguedas's inner tension made it possible for him to bring the magical-real machine into its most proper position, at that moment the nonsynchronous contradiction reversed itself and arrest ensued. The result was, of course, not a punctual moment of noncontradiction but rather an aporetic gap of meaning, and disjunction offered incalculable loss, a final arrest of productivity.

But with it the Latin American transculturating machine came to its end, in the double sense of epochal culmination and of equally epochal exhaustion. It is in that sense, in the sense of the double sense, that the novel triumphs through its very failure. Cornejo Polar possibly points in the same direction when he says: "Paradoxically, the highest interest and value in Arguedas' last novel is to be, tragically but enlighteningly, testimony . . . of unresolved contradictions, on which . . . it configures itself as a work of art" ("Ensayo" 301). I, however, do not think the contradictions are unresolved: the most extreme moment of transculturation, the transculturation of transculturation, results and resolves itself in aporetic, unreconstructible loss. Through it Arguedas's suicide marks the beginning of an alternative system of writing: a "defiance of disappropriation," a writing of dis-affect, an antimodern writing whereby his text comes to present itself as a passionate signifier of the end of signification. But the end of signification is not yet the last word.

Arguedas will remove himself, the last man of the old cycle, so that a new cycle may begin. That is why in a letter written on November 27, that is, the day before his suicide, and included as such within the novel, Arguedas mentions, almost casually, that his novel is "casi inconclusa" ["almost unfinished"] (*Zorro* 252). It is "almost unfinished" because he had not yet killed himself, but he had already made the irrevocable decision to do so. After Arguedas's suicide the novel will and will not be finished, simultaneously and undecidably: no other interpretation of "casi inconclusa" is, to my mind, possible, although I realize that this interpretation is based on the very unreadability of Arguedas's phrase. Arguedas's suicide is, properly speaking, the end of the book. Arguedas's radical disincorporation is

also the investiture of his book, through an unheard-of act of identification, with the phantasmatic aura of his own split, melancholic identity, thus testifying to the final impossibility of transculturation. With and through Arguedas's suicide, the conditions of literary possibility of *Los zorros* open themselves onto their conditions of impossibility. We are far from "an ample overcoming of modernization" in Rama's sense.

But what about magical realism? Beyond any and all magical-real episodes in the text, every intervention of the foxes, every piercing sound of the bug called Onquray Onquray, the ominous messenger, every *yunsa* and every *yawar mayu*, and every song of the mountain ducks that gives the foxes the ability to understand the soul of the world, Arguedas's death is the truest magical-real event of the novel, as it gives itself as testimony to a violent conflict of cultures that will not be mediated away. Arguedas's death is a fissure in the textual sense that paradoxically organizes the text's plenitude of sense: meaning, in this novel, results from meaning's absolute implosion. As an event of writing placed between the novel's failure and failure's other side, a rift, a gap, a bullet hole of total disjunction opens itself: as soon as meaning emerges, it needs to be erased anew. Or better, meaning is here the necessity of its erasure. Guido Podestá has pointed out that *Los zorros* represents "the irresolution of an aporia," (101), implying that in what we could call the andeanization of modernity there is nothing like emancipation. For Podestá, *Los zorros* witnesses "the emergency, understanding it as the unexpected appearance, of the postmodern condition in Peru" ("*Zorro*" 101; my trans.). This emergence/emergency, at the same time event and danger, is aporetically resolved in the text: doubt, the extreme perplexity between the andeanization of modernity and therapeutic failure, will not remain stable. Every aporia induces a moment of loss, in which the fight for sense is negatively solved, solved in negativity: that is ultimately the "unequal-ness" of Arguedas's struggle, and his legacy. Arguedas's renunciation of the "rhetoric of innocence" destabilizes to an extreme the conciliation of "magic" and "empire," in Moretti's terms, which is the price of the incorporation of Latin American writing into the world-system.

The loss at the end of magical realism makes it difficult to read the magical-realist tradition as a tradition in which national allegory is the ultimate account. Arguedas shows that the magical-real

moment is tendentially a moment in which the national allegory, on the other side of its utopian directives, opens onto its colonizing substratum. Magical realism comes with Arguedas to its theoretical impossibility because Arguedas shows how magical realism is an impossible scene of emancipatory representation staged from a colonizing perspective. Arguedas destroys the good faith of a deluded enterprise. And he offers no alternative, other than insight. Arguedas's posthumous novel follows a path that is diametrically opposed to the one denounced by Moretti and counterintentionally supported by Rama's theory of transculturation and by so many other critics. Arguedas offers a new possibility for Latin American writing by radicalizing his own theoretical investigation—which, as often happens, was also an affective investigation his psychic texture could not bear. Arguedas's novel, at its limit, opens transculturation theory to the presence of a silent and unreadable event. Arguedas's suicide occurs, for us, as a language event. It is an illegible one, in the sense that it opens a fissure between language and signification. Maybe all language events do that: they produce themselves by showing illegibility, disparity between meaning and the materiality of the sign. Perhaps then an event is more of an event, the more illegible it is. As one opens one's self to the event, the event becomes more and more difficult to inscribe in a process of signification. An event, a language event, is an excess whose sense is only given in its recess, its withdrawal. As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it, an event is that which exposes the excess of meaning over any accomplishment of signification.²⁰ The language event offers a possibility for thinking in which thought fleetingly becomes a total resistance to sense. Thinking, an excess of sense, will depend then on the possibility of loss of sense.

This loss of sense within narrative organizes the language event as an instance of denarrativization. Arguedas's suicide, the end of the narrative, is a moment of denarrativization. It has an epistemological import that affects the Latin American literary tradition at the archival level and brings it closer to the indifferentiation of action and meaning that we saw in chapter 3, following Willy Thayer, as the condition of intellectual work in the age of real subsumption. Arguedas's suicide, the denarrativization of narrative within the narrative, is the most intense, and therefore the most illegible accomplishment of magical realism. Because it brings magical realism to

its fulfillment, it breaks magical realism; it brings it to the end of its narrative and it opens it, in all the strength of the paradox, onto the possibility of an actual critique of empire.

With Arguedas's literary act, Latin American foundational utopianism comes to its end. Arguedas loses for us all traces of the possibility of a magical-real mediation of cultures, just as much as he loses the possibility of a final conciliation between land and the human, between cultures and what we, against all evidence, have insisted on calling culture. He therefore also signals the end of the anthropological paradigm for literary practice and, with it, for all critical practice: so the cycle of the fire lark may, perhaps, begin.

regionalism, in its transculturating zeal, seeks an integration with the hegemonic perspective.

- 7 I take the expression *situational consciousness* from Jameson ("Third-World Literature" 85). In "Postmodernism and the Market" Jameson refers explicitly to the Sartrean underpinnings of the term: "The Sartrean concept of the situation is a new way of thinking history as such" (288). In another passage he refers to situational consciousness as "a demystifying eyeball-to-eyeball encounter with daily life, with no distance and no embellishments" (286).
- 8 See Carlos Vilas, "Neoliberal Social Policy," for a concise account of the specific costs of neoliberalism on the Latin American subaltern classes and also of the differences between the national-popular or Keynesian-Fordist and the neoliberal Latin American states. A more extensive treatment of the impact of neoliberalism on Latin America can be found in Victor Bulmer-Thomas, *The New Economic Model in Latin America and Its Impact on Income Distribution and Poverty*.
- 9 But see Brett Levinson, "The State/Market Duopoly," for a non-neoliberal account of the market in its contemporary duopolic relationship with the state, which is no longer a nation-state.
- 10 Althusser's final insistence on denarrativization is interesting in this context: "my objective: never to tell myself stories, which is the only definition of materialism I have ever subscribed to" (*Future* 169); "Not to indulge in story-telling' still remains for me the one and only definition of materialism" (221). Beverley ends the introduction to his *Subalternity*, after referring to his own Althusserianism, saying: "Would it be possible to have a work of 'theory' that would be composed entirely of stories? Perhaps that is what is still worth thinking about in Borges, despite his overtly reactionary politics (or are those politics related to his function as a storyteller as well)?" (24). Well, I think the objective of Borges's stories is in almost every case to open into a space of de-narrativization. If pushed, I might (with the later Althusser) say the same regarding all theoretical work. I dedicate this note to John Beverley.
- 11 Gyan Prakash, "Writing Post-Orientalist Histories of the Third World" 394–403 passim. See also Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook's contestation in "After Orientalism" 141–67, and Prakash's response: "Can the 'Subaltern' Ride?" 168–84.

Chapter Six: The End of Magical Realism

- 1 See Antonio Cornejo Polar, *La formación de la tradición literaria en el Perú* 137–55, for an illuminating commentary on those cultural struggles in Peruvian history. See also Rama, *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* 11–116, where the conflict is studied as a conflict between "regionalism" and "modernization," and "Los Procesos de transculturación en la narrativa latinoamericana" 203–33.

- 2 See Clifford, "On Ethnographic Surrealism" 117–51. See also Denis Hollier, *College of Sociology*. Enrico Mario Santi has mentioned the influence of the College de Sociologie in Octavio Paz's *El laberinto de la soledad* ("Introducción" [*Laberinto*] 98–106), but much remains to be done in the wider context of Latin American contemporary literature.
- 3 As we saw in chapter 4, Taussig's *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man* adds other insights into Latin American magical realism. See also Taussig's *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* and Fredric Jameson's "On Magic Realism in Film," for work on magical realism that departs from Bloch's notion of noncontemporaneity (Bloch 97–116). The recent compilation of articles by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, *Magical Realism*, is very useful, although I find the editorial position highly controversial. See also Amaryll Chanady, *Magical Realism and the Fantastic*, and, of course, Irleamar Chiampi, *O realismo maravilhoso*.
- 4 For Fernando Ortiz' development of the notion, see *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* 129–35. See also Gustavo Pérez Firmat's essay on Ortiz in *The Cuban Condition* 16–33.
- 5 The concept of transculturation has been thematized, from different critical positions, in books and texts that were published (or in manuscripts I have had access to) after this chapter was finished. Let me mention Gareth Williams's (in *The Other Side of the Popular*) and John Beverley's (in *Subalternity and Representation*) critiques as for the most part, if not totally, consistent with my own. Let me also refer to John Kraniauskas's "Hybridity in a Transnational Frame" as what I would consider a useful resuscitation, since Kraniauskas's purpose is to understand (critically) transculturated phenomena for the sake of a historical phenomenology of Latin American cultural practices. See also Román De la Campa, *Latin Americanism*, Doris Sommer, *Proceed with Caution*, and Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, for other interesting uses.
- 6 They have not remained unread by, among others, Forgues, William Rowe, Cornejo Polar, or Martin Lienhard, but they have remained mostly unread in the sense that they have not been thought to bear on the Latin American literary and cultural tradition, where they enforce a deep destabilization. Although this is not the place to elaborate on it, I tend to understand Arguedas's critical self-positioning vis-à-vis Latin American writing in *El zorro's primer diario* (7–23) from that particular problem. Arguedas had to feel that his boom contemporaries remained willfully blind to what was for him a literally blinding light. See Rama's comments in "Procesos" 225–26.
- 7 For Jameson, in words that will resonate for any reader of Arguedas's last novel, "Third-world texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic, necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public

- third-world culture and society" ("Third-World Literature" 69). Jameson has received a lot of criticism for that sentence, but I haven't found a text where those words do not ultimately prove true: perhaps the controversy surrounding them, and certainly in the case of Franco, arises from a misunderstanding concerning the term *allegory*. In any case, for Arguedas's last novel, those words should constitute something like an epigraph.
- 8 In particular, Lienhard, *Cultura popular andina y forma novelesca*, and Cornejo Polar, *Las universos narrativos de José María Arguedas*. But see also their shorter essays cited in the bibliography.
 - 9 Sara Castro-Klarén may be quoted to give an example of a critical state of affairs that has possibly started to change in recent years: "*El sexto* as well as *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* are minor narrative works . . . [where] a desire to denounce reality dominates. As a consequence, those works are weak in structure and in narrative development" (*Mundo* 200; my trans.). (I agree with Castro-Klarén about *El sexto*.)
 - 10 See Cornejo, Polar, *Sobre literatura y crítica latinoamericana*, "Nuevas reflexiones sobre la crítica latinoamericana," and *Escribir en el aire*. See also Mabel Moraña's study of the notion of "heterogeneidad" in Cornejo, "*Escribir en el aire: Heterogeneidad y estudios culturales*."
 - 11 In "Ideología de la transculturación" Moraña uses Patricia D'Allemand's phrase to refer to Rama as an "'interlocutor silenciado' pero de innegable fecundidad [en las teorizaciones actuales]" the "silent interlocutor" but of an undeniable fecundity (in contemporary theorizations)] (7).
 - 12 "Yo no soy un aculturado" (*Zorro* 257). Apparently Arguedas had wanted that text to appear as a foreword to the novel, but it has always been published at its end. See *Zorro* xxviii.
 - 13 On Chimbote, see César Caviedes, "The Latin American Boom-Town in the Literary View of José María Arguedas."
 - 14 See Julia Kristeva's analysis of depression and melancholia, *Black Sun*. The black sun is a well-known symbol in Latin American literature: it can be found in Ernesto Sábato's *Sobre héroes y tumbas* as well as in Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela*, for instance. Arguedas improves on that image by denying its expressive sufficiency.
 - 15 On the general topic of literary autobiography in Arguedas, see Ignacio Díaz Ruiz's interesting monograph, *Literatura y biografía en José María Arguedas*. See also Mario Vargas Llosa, "Literatura y suicidio," on literature and suicide in Arguedas. Vargas Llosa's *La utopía arcaica*, book is an ideological attempt to minimize Arguedas's historical importance while recognizing his talent as a storyteller, see chapter 8.
 - 16 With his customary precision Cornejo Polar remarks: "the death of the narrator . . . leads to the interpretation of that atrocious fact as a silent sign which permeates . . . the discourse that precedes it and announces it" ("Ensayo" 304; my trans., here and below).
 - 17 Gustavo Gutiérrez remarks that when Arguedas says that the second cycle is about to begin or has already begun, he does not mean that the first one

is over: "His very life fell prey to the clash between the cycles" (Gutiérrez, Romualdo, and Escobar, *Arguedas* 37). For an extended interpretation of the two cycles' imagery as a reference to an "anthropocentric turn [which] does not imply the disappearance of the mythical or the religious," see Pedro Trigo, *Arguedas*, (236; my trans.), which includes Gutiérrez' commentary on Trigo's essay "Entre las calandrias." José Miguel Oviedo suggests that the notion of the beginning of the fire lark cycle might also have to do with the political events developing in Peru at the time of writing: the "military revolution" and its indigenist rhetoric. Arguedas would have had, according to Oviedo, tremendous difficulty dealing with the political implementation of changes affecting indigenous societies, which he could not simply oppose. For Oviedo that was the "detonante" of Arguedas's suicide ("El último Arguedas" 145). See Sybila Arredondo's presentation of Arguedas's correspondence between 1966 and 1969 to understand further Arguedas's psychological and intellectual crisis, "*El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* en la correspondencia de Arguedas."

- 18 See, for instance, among other possible texts, José Matos Mar's *Desborde popular y crisis del estado*; the classic *Buscando un inca*, by Alberto Flores Galindo; and the pertinent sections of Orin Starn, Carlos Iván DeGregori, and Robin Kirk's *The Peru Reader*. Of course Arguedas's suicide is *also* an expression of radical skepticism about the formation of a Peruvian state of justice. Arguedas's novel turns the national allegory on its head, or breaks it, while at the same time being entirely contained within it. It was that sense that I had in mind when I said earlier that Arguedas takes the Jamesonian model as far as it can go in order to turn it against itself, the affirmation of a new "cycle" of historical time notwithstanding.
- 19 The "unwriting" of Latin American history signals for González Echevarría the beginning of the writing of the "archive," a "mode beyond anthropology" (*Myth* 15). Archival writing is for him the "razing" of the "various mediations through which Latin America was narrated, the systems from which fiction borrowed the truth-bearing forms, erased to assume the new mediation that requires this level-ground of self and history" (17). But for González Echevarría "what is left for the novel after *Los pasos perdidos* and *Cien años de soledad*" is simply "fiction itself" (18). The "voiding of the anthropological mediation" results in "a relentless memory that disassembles the fictions of myth, literature and even history" (20, 23), but such memory is itself the literary system as a fictional system. Although González Echevarría's model is powerful, it doesn't yet provide for the possibility of developing strong internal distinctions regarding archival writing. There is a sense in which Arguedas, by ultimately "voiding the anthropological mediation," also at the same time destabilizes the archive as literary system. If *Los zorros* is indeed archival writing, it is so only to the extent that it is also antiarchival, for it shows the very pretense of archival constitution as always already insufficient, always already invested in a project of "overcoming modernization" through an intensifi-

cation of modernism. There is an interesting hesitation in *Myth and Archive*: toward the end of the first chapter, after explaining the notion of the archive as that which puts an end to the anthropological paradigm, González Echevarría doubts his own words by saying: “the current mode, perhaps beyond the anthropological mediation, the locus on which my own text is situated” (40; my emphasis). Perhaps the limits of the archive are also the limits of transculturation, which *Los zorros*, much more so than *Los pasos perdidos* or *Cien años de soledad*, and even in essentially different and opposite ways, thematizes. Arguedas, with his last novel, announces the voiding of the archive itself, or its loss: not archival gaps, but the archive as gap.

- 20 See Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'oubli de la philosophie* 70–71. Nancy's entire book is concerned with the thinking of the connections between meaning and signification in senses that have influenced the writing of this chapter.

Chapter Seven: The Aura of Testimonio

- 1 On “national security” see Noam Chomsky, “The Fifth Freedom”; Juan Rial, *Las Fuerzas Armadas*; Brian Loveman and Thomas Davies, *The Politics of Antipolitics* 163 and passim; Alain Rouquié, *The Military and the State in Latin America*; and Lawrence Weschler, *A Miracle, a Universe* 111–23, among other possible sources.
- 2 See Daniel Mato, “Construcción de identidades pannaacionales y transnacionales en tiempos de globalización.” Mato understands the “irruption and growing political and cultural importance of new base organizations and political and social movements organized around local, ethnic, class, gender, and generational identities among others” (218; my translation) as a direct response to globalization in contemporary times. See also Yúdice, “Postmodernity and Transnational Capitalism in Latin America” 7 and passim.
- 3 The notion of literature as colonial discourse in the case of Latin America has been presented by John Beverley: “Latin American literature [is endowed] with an ambiguous cultural role and legacy: literature (or, less anachronistically, *letras*) is a colonial institution, one of the basic institutions of Spanish colonial rule in the Americas; yet it is also one of the institutions crucial to the development of an autonomous creole and then ‘national’ (although perhaps not popular-democratic) culture. [Contemporary literature] still bears the traces of this paradox” (*Against Literature* 2). See also Angel Rama, *La ciudad letrada*.
- 4 See for instance Hugo Achugar, “Notas sobre el discurso testimonial latinoamericano” 279–81. Elzbieta Sklodowska quotes Angel Rama declaring that he was the one to recommend that *Casa de las Américas* establish testimonio as a new category for their literary contest in January 1969 (Skłodowska, *Testimonio* 56). In *Literature and Politics in the Central American Revolutions* Beverley and Marc Zimmerman argue that in the mid-1960s the popularity of ethnographic life stories such as those by