

UC Berkeley

UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Narrative Activism in Mid-Century Latin American Fiction

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/50h0193x>

Author

Spira, Karen Alexandra

Publication Date

2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

Narrative Activism in Mid-Century Latin American Fiction

By

Karen Alexandra Spira

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Comparative Literature

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Estelle Tarica, Chair

Professor Francine Masiello

Professor Robert Kaufman

Professor Dorothy J. Hale

Spring 2013

Abstract

Narrative Activism in Mid-Century Latin American Fiction

by

Karen Alexandra Spira

Doctor of Philosophy in Comparative Literature

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Estelle Tarica, Chair

This dissertation argues that the intense politicization of Latin American prose fiction in the mid-twentieth century creates a textual field so potent that the smallest narrative units brim with political significance. Through analysis of two mid-century authors, Peruvian José María Arguedas and Mexican Juan Rulfo, I demonstrate how by reading at a smaller scale, with sensitivity to minute manipulations of form, we at once enrich and complicate our understanding of their fiction's aesthetic and political aims. Moving beyond immediately visible formal categories such as plot structure and dialect, I explore how Rulfo and Arguedas deploy subtle, strange, and inventive narrative strategies—such as understated descriptive passages and small-scale mimetic lapses—in order to lay bare entrenched colonial patterns of thought and behavior and to model pluralistic, egalitarian modes of discourse and perception. This politicized mobilization of the formal categories of fiction is what I call “narrative activism.”

Following Bakhtin, I explore novels and short stories as imaginative democracies—resonant with the cacophony of dissenting voices—built up from the textual grassroots: the double-voiced word or phrase, the quiet shift in narrative perspective. My analysis also draws on classical narratology, feminist narratology, and the new field of unnatural narratology, yet I do not privilege narrative form at the expense of political concerns. Rather, the dissertation models a method of reading suited to mid-century prose works, whose subtle and complex formal properties constitute the very locus of their engagement with political issues. Though analysis of form has animated prior critical approaches to Rulfo and Arguedas, perhaps most famously in Ángel Rama's account of their fiction as narrative transculturation, I contend that these studies lack the fine-tuned analysis narratology enables and mid-century texts reward. The tools of narratology allow me to isolate and examine textual properties prior critics have not seen in order to bring into clearer focus the political stakes, ambitions, and agency of the mid-century tradition. Across four chapters I offer readings of the politics of form thus conceived, but I also engage the work of such theorists as Susan Sniader Lanser and Geoffrey Galt Harpham to consider how prose fiction from the 1940s and 50s—

conceived by its authors as ethically and politically relevant, then further politicized by its reading public—takes readerly transformation as its ultimate end.

Chapter One, “José María Arguedas and the Reinvention of Narrative Voice: A New Look at *Yawar Fiesta*,” analyzes Arguedas’s reinvention of narrative voice in an overlooked work of mid-century fiction. Chapter Two, “The Politics of Description in Arguedas’s *Los ríos profundos*,” complements this focus on narrative voice in Arguedas’s work with analysis of the politics of the sensory body as worked out in obscure passages of narrative description. Chapter Three, “The Narratee, The Reader, and the Problem of Judgment in Juan Rulfo’s ‘¡Diles que no me maten!’,” argues for the crucial, yet widely unacknowledged, role played by the narratee in the politics of Juan Rulfo’s fiction. Chapter Four, “Heteroglossia in Latin American Fiction: Rulfo’s *Pedro Páramo*,” argues that heteroglossia constitutes an important mode of narrative activism in *Pedro Páramo* and relates this claim to Ángel Rama’s and Roberto González Echevarría’s heteroglossic theories of Latin American fiction. Throughout the dissertation, I demonstrate how attention to small, seemingly marginal details of mid-century fiction illuminates the texts’ political commitments in unexpectedly powerful ways.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgments | ii |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1 José María Arguedas and the Reinvention of Narrative Voice: A New Look at <i>Yawar Fiesta</i> | 10 |
| Chapter 2 The Politics of Description in Arguedas's <i>Los ríos profundos</i> | 31 |
| Chapter 3 The Narratee, The Reader, and the Problem of Judgment in Juan Rulfo's "¡Diles que no me maten!" | 57 |
| Chapter 4 Heteroglossia in Latin American Fiction: Rulfo's <i>Pedro Páramo</i> | 79 |
| Works Cited | 97 |

Acknowledgments

It takes a village to write a dissertation. Throughout the process of completing my dissertation, I have benefitted from the support and guidance of brilliant scholars, generous colleagues, devoted friends, and the most caring family a graduate student could hope for.

Estelle Tarica's intellectual mentorship, encouragement, and patience made this project possible. As my dissertation chair, she was always open to my exploration of unorthodox avenues of thought and provided me with the guidance I needed to see those explorations through to their ends. Throughout my graduate studies, and particularly during the dissertation stage, Dorothy Hale has been a vital source of inspiration. When I have felt lost or discouraged, a visit to Dori's office has never failed to set me back on track and help me fall in love with my project again. Francine Masiello's discerning eye and spot-on advice have helped me see my project's strengths and, just as importantly, have consistently pushed my thinking one step further. Robert Kaufman has been an important interlocutor on the issue of the intersection of art and politics, and a source of kindness at key moments.

The "Why Democracy?" Fellows of the Berkeley Center for the Study of Value offered valuable feedback on Chapter Three of the dissertation. The Center provided funding that allowed me to focus on the dissertation full-time during my final semester of graduate studies, for which I am very thankful.

I am grateful to Linda von Hoene and Sabrina Soracco, and their Summer Institute for Preparing Future Faculty, for helping me see the way to finishing the dissertation and for redoubling my resolve to become a professor. Likewise, Erica Roberts' words of encouragement helped me push through the rough spots and keep the faith.

Graduate school has given me the gift of friendships that will easily last a lifetime. Karina Palau and I have shared everything while writing our dissertations in parallel: the moments of doubt, the moments of triumph, the moments of not being able to write because our babies (and then toddlers) needed us. Her company during our "writing dates," her wise advice on writing and life, the warmth of her home—in short, her friendship—have enriched the dissertation-writing process in countless ways. Allen Young and Dean Krouk have been dear friends and valued collaborators. I have relied on Allen's critical eye to help me refine my ideas and on his generous, fun nature to help me enjoy these years amidst the hard work.

Though we have pursued degrees at different schools, Sarah Wischnia has been a source of wise advice and sustaining breakfast dates. "You will obtain your goal if you maintain your course." Indeed. From afar, Rachel Benoff and Hana Elwell helped me see the good in what I was doing and cheered me on to the finish line.

And my family. I could not have finished this dissertation without the unconditional love and support of my parents, Vicki and Charles, who always believed in the importance of my project, no matter how obscure or abstract the writers, ideas, and terms seemed. For the past three years, my parents have spent countless hours caring for my son Tobias and providing support for my family so that I could focus on writing. It is

a testament to their generosity of heart and their devotion as parents that they did this with joy and love. My mom gets special mention for doubling as my writing coach (and research assistant, and personal organizer, and a million other things); she was always there for me when I needed a pep talk, or to talk ideas out, or to talk about anything but the dissertation. My “other” set of parents, Elaine and George, have always expressed excitement about my chosen path in life and encouraged me to pursue my dreams. They have also spent many hours caring for Tobias and taking care of the household so that I could write. Though my birth mother, Ardine, is not here to read these Acknowledgments, I thank her for passing on to me the adventurous spirit that inspired me to climb this mountain.

My older brother Adam and my sister-in-law Lainie—both having written dissertations themselves—have been the source of excellent advice and also of vital words of encouragement. My sister-in-law Vanessa, yet another dissertation veteran, always had the right words at hand. My younger brother Daniel offered helpful moments of laughter and affection, in the way only he knows how. My Aunt Gail and Uncle Irwin have nourished me and my family, body and spirit, throughout the process. Cousins Donald, Elka, Josh, and Sarah have made the Bay Area feel like home.

My husband Jason and my son Tobias were my constant companions on this trek. I am grateful to Jason for his patience, his selflessness, and the purity of his love. I treasure these three rare gifts every single day, along with his ability to make me laugh and his proclivity for spontaneous fun. Soon we will bring kitchen dancing to North Carolina. Tobias came into my life just as this project was getting underway. His inimitable sparkle and sense of fun are the best reward at the end of a writing day.

Introduction

My dissertation, *Narrative Activism in Mid-Century Latin American Fiction*, argues that the intense politicization of Latin American prose fiction in the early twentieth century creates a textual field so potent that the smallest narrative units brim with political significance. Through analysis of narrative voice in two mid-century authors, Peruvian José María Arguedas and Mexican Juan Rulfo, I demonstrate how by reading at a smaller scale, with sensitivity to minute manipulations of form, we at once enrich and complicate our understanding of mid-century fiction's aesthetic and political aims. Moving beyond immediately visible formal categories such as plot structure and dialect, I explore how Arguedas and Rulfo deploy subtle, strange, and novel narrative strategies—such as understated descriptive passages and small-scale mimetic lapses—to lay bare entrenched colonial patterns of thought and behavior as well as to model pluralistic, egalitarian modes of discourse and perception. This politicized mobilization of the formal categories of fiction is what I call “narrative activism.”

In their prose fiction Arguedas and Rulfo engage the legacy of unprecedented social movements in their respective nations during the early decades of the twentieth century. In 1920s Peru, indigenista writers, artists, and political figures sought to promote the integration of indigenous groups into the modern nation through recognizing their contribution to a distinctive Peruvian culture as well as through challenging their exploitation by way of such institutions as the hacienda system. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) promised the dissolution of a powerful oligarchy and its replacement with a government that represented the interests of the peasantry and urban poor. By mid-century, however, these movements had run their course. Historian Tulio Halperin Donghi identifies 1940, the end of Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency, as a turning point for postrevolutionary Mexico, after which “una elite gobernante . . . sin dejar de proclamar su lealtad a los objetivos sociales de la revolución, los había sacrificado sistemáticamente a la aceleración del avance económico” (500). Likewise, in Peru, the explosion of indigenista cultural production that characterized the opening decades of the twentieth century slowed down by the 1940s. What began as what critic Jorge Coronado calls an “opposition force” had become, much like the Revolution in Mexico, “an establishment set of practices,” shaping both Peruvian government policy and academic work (9). Despite this absorption of indigenismo into multiple facets of Peruvian national life, Coronado describes the movement as having had “at best an ambivalent effect on the day-to-day lives of the indigenous population” (9). Rulfo and Arguedas thus both write at a moment when it becomes clear that the great promise of early twentieth-century social movements in their respective nations was not to be fulfilled.

The mid-century represents a time of intensive development and modernization across Latin America. Critic Priscilla Archibald describes this period in Peruvian republican history as one of rapid change: “The 1950s represented the beginning of the most dramatic remaking of Peruvian society since the conquest. During two short decades Peru was transformed from a millennially rural society into a predominantly urban one” (81). Along similar lines, Carlos Blanco Aguinaga describes the mid-century as a time of rapid economic growth in Mexico, accompanied by a population explosion in Mexico City: “En esos mismos años, del 40 al 52, el ingreso nacional bruto ha pasado de

6 a 52 billones, en tanto que la producción industrial se ha multiplicado por 5,5 y la construcción por 4,5. En 1940, la capital, el Distrito Federal, tenía un millón y medio de habitantes; ahora tiene ya tres” (Introducción 11). Intent on modernization, Latin American governments supported the economic development of large cities such as Lima and Mexico City. Regional and indigenous populations, in turn, faced new pressure to modify their lifeways and, in many cases, abandon their homes to pursue economic opportunity in urban centers.¹ Ángel Rama describes regional cultures during this period as nothing less than threatened with extinction: “A las regiones internas, que representan plurales conformaciones culturales, los centros capitalinos ofrecen una disyuntiva fatal en sus dos términos: o retroceden, entrando en agonía, o renuncian a sus valores, es decir, mueren” (34). If in the early decades of the twentieth century the Mexican Revolution and Peruvian indigenismo signaled the possibility of indigenous cultures and peasant farmers emerging as newly empowered protagonists on the political and cultural stages of more egalitarian, pluralistic nations, by mid-century this vision was dampened by the reality of what Rama describes as the drive toward urbanization and modernization, guided by “la filosofía del progreso” (34).

In their prose fiction, Arguedas and Rulfo reckon with the divided societies left in the wake of indigenista and revolutionary fervor. In line with Brian Gollnick’s observation that regionalist authors write prose fiction with “the supposition that their works would participate in broad dialogues on the major issues of their day,” these authors approach prose fiction as a crucial venue for reflecting, problematizing, and “imagining otherwise” violent divisions in Peruvian and Mexican society (57). At the same time, both authors emphasize the pointedly literary character of their contribution, distinguishing their work from sociological texts and political pamphlets. In “El desafío de la creación,” an essay published in 1980 in the *Revista de la Universidad de México*, Rulfo describes fiction writing as a subtractive process that compels him to remove himself from his stories so that the alterity of characters and discourses—and not his own ideas and philosophies—drives the unfolding of events:

Yo dejo que aquellos personajes funcionen por sí y no con mi inclusión, porque, entonces entro en la divagación del ensayo, en la elucubración; llega uno a meter sus propias ideas, se siente filósofo, en fin, y uno trata de hacer creer hasta en la ideología que tiene uno, su manera de pensar sobre la vida, o sobre el mundo Cuando sucede eso, se vuelve uno ensayista. (*Toda la obra* 385)

The political thrust of Rulfo’s fiction will thus have little to do with expressing particular political ideas. Recognizable in Rulfo’s description of his narrative art is Bakhtin’s description of the novelist as “utiliz[ing] now one language, now another, in order to avoid giving himself up wholly to either of them . . . in order that he himself might remain as it were neutral with regard to language, a third party in a quarrel between two

¹ The Peru-Cornell Project, an experiment in “rapid modernization” undertaken by a partnership between Cornell University and Peru’s *Instituto Indigenista*, provides a harrowing example of the Peruvian government’s perspective during the 1950s on indigenous culture’s basic incompatibility with modern national life. See Priscilla Archibald’s *Imagining Modernity in the Andes* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011), pp. 82-90, for an informative discussion of the project.

people (although he might be a *biased* third party)” (“Discourse in the Novel” 314).² In his prose fiction, Rulfo features two distinct approaches to the act of representation that allows him to subtract himself from the text.

In the first strategy, visible in *El llano en llamas* (1953), Rulfo confronts his readers with shocking events and circumstances that he will neither explain nor interpret, and with deeply perspectival accounts of lived experience presented seemingly without mediation. The literary rather than essayistic essence of the text inheres in the intensity of the reader’s encounter with this unmediated otherness—what many critics have described as the text’s ambiguity and laconicism. As I discuss in Chapter Three, I locate the narrative activism of Rulfo’s work in the tense, demanding encounter it stages between the reader and this otherness by obligating the reader to render judgment in complex conflicts about which she never knows quite enough. Rulfo’s 1950 novel *Pedro Páramo* (1955), in contrast, brings into focus the potential political effects of artistic mediation. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Rulfo interweaves different modes of representation in the novel, representative of both vibrant, new artistic languages and lifeless, highly conventional ones. Through this “system of languages” (Bakhtin), Rulfo prompts reflection on the political uses to which literary mediation can be put. In the worst case, it can create and solidify stereotypes, while in the best case it can provide a new way to value the languages and perspectives of socially marginalized groups such as the Mexican regional cultures featured in Rulfo’s fiction.

For Arguedas, literature’s political intervention emphasizes the unique manner in which the literary text can mediate our interaction with reality by representing it in an infinite variety of guises. In a revealing comment made during the course of the “Mesa Redonda sobre *Todas Las Sangres*,” a 1965 roundtable on Arguedas’s *Todas las sangres* (1964), Arguedas insists on the literary—or more precisely, novelistic—prerogative to encode political reality in such a way that it becomes almost unrecognizable. The roundtable sought to bring together literary and social-scientific approaches to the representation and analysis of Peruvian society. At one point during the interdisciplinary discussion, Arguedas became frustrated with a line of questioning that he saw as failing to understand the literariness of his work, and attempted to spell out what distinguishes literary representation from other discursive forms: “Yo no he hecho una novela estrictamente política, *gracias a Dios*; yo he hecho una novela. ¿Que falta el ejercicio, que falta la iglesia?: *no lo creo*; está en todas partes, casi en cada página. Pero no lo está como en un panfleto, o como en una tesis; está como, como en una novela” (Rochabrún 37). The stutter and tautology that come at the conclusion of Arguedas’s retort underscore the complexity of the question Arguedas addresses, and which I pursue in each of the chapters of my dissertation: Where in the novel can we look to find the political? How can it be that Arguedas’s interlocutor does not see the army or the church as present in *Todas las sangres*, while Arguedas contends that they are everywhere, “casi en cada página”? What reading strategies allow us to connect with this potentially elusive political valence of the literary text? Arguedas’s comment directs us toward a kind of reading that attends to what we might call the textual grassroots, including

² An important difference between Rulfo’s vision of prose art as expressed in “El desafío de la creación” and Bakhtin’s theory of the novel is that while for Rulfo, the act of exhibiting languages that are not his own divorces his act of representation from his own intentions, Bakhtin sees the novelist’s exhibition of languages as a way of voicing his intentions, though indirectly.

fundamental aspects of literary dynamics such as quiet shifts in narrative perspective or ironic wordings.

Arguedas and Rulfo are representative of a larger mid-century Latin American tradition, including authors Elena Garro, Rosario Castellanos, Jorge Icaza, and Miguel Angel Asturias, among others, that creates a newly powerful politics of form—what I call ‘narrative activism.’ In choosing to focus on Arguedas and Rulfo in my dissertation, I enter into direct dialogue with Angel Rama, who in his 1982 work *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina* identifies these two authors as paradigmatic of a process he terms “narrative transculturation.” Influenced by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz’s theory of transculturation, Rama theorizes “narrative transculturation” as a process through which Latin American authors draw on contemporary Western as well as regional cultural traditions in order to create literary texts that both make use of modernist literary technique (fragmentation, an emphasis on interior life over external events, temporal dislocation, etc.) and express traditional Latin American beliefs, values, and cultural practices. According to this theory, Latin American authors do not passively copy modernist literary trends, but actively adapt modernist literary techniques to the Latin American milieu. Transcultured novels “no se rinden a la modernización sino que la utilizan para fines propios” (88).

Rama’s study makes strong claims for the agency of transcultured novels. First, he sees them as carrying out important work in cultural preservation: they give a modern, durable form to cultural beliefs and practices that might otherwise be lost or forgotten because of the pressures of modernization. Through their representation in the novel, regional cultures are able to “prolongar su vigencia en una forma aún más rica e interior que antes” (51). Second, and somewhat outlandishly, Rama characterizes what he describes as these novels’ enactment of harmonious cultural blending as “prueba fehaciente” that similar blending can happen among people groups (231).³ Both of these accounts of the political significance of the transculturators rely on a view of the literary arts as highly—even strictly—mimetic, in the sense of making strong claims for the text’s ability to replicate the world with a high level of accuracy. According to Rama, regional cultures can pass into the novel and there be preserved for the ages. What is more, when cultures are combined in novelistic discourse, their interactions create empirically valid models for how cultures interact in society. The novel’s agency resides in its potential for faithful imitation of the world beyond the text.

With the term “narrative activism,” I refer to a fundamentally different kind of political significance and agency than the one that Rama outlines in *Transculturación narrativa*. Fundamental to Rama’s project is the authenticity of regional cultures’ representation in Rulfo and Arguedas’s work. For cultures to be either preserved amidst the pressures of modernization or manipulated so as to yield empirically valid results, transculturation demands accurate portrayals of cultural practices and beliefs. My own project, in contrast, emphasizes a form of political significance that emerges from the

³ Antonio Cornejo Polar describes the nature of cultural contact in the Latin American (and specifically indigenista) novel in a manner almost directly opposed to Rama’s characterization. Where Rama sees fusion and harmonious, mutually enriching coexistence, Cornejo Polar sees disjointedness, conflict, and violence. The indigenista novel, and especially Arguedas’s version of it, is “un ejercicio cultural que se sitúa en la conflictiva intersección de dos sistemas socioculturales, intentando un diálogo que muchas veces es polémico, y expresando, en el nivel que le corresponde, uno de los problemas medulares de la nacionalidad: su desmembrada y conflictiva constitución” (*Novela indigenista* 88).

nature of the literary text as *artifice*. Rulfo and Arguedas pioneer new narrative practices, I argue, not in order to faithfully recreate regional cultures on the page, but in order to intervene in a history of representational practices, complicit with colonial ideology, that have constructed regional and indigenous cultures as on the page uncivilized, backward, and illegitimate. With narrative activism, I refer to Arguedas and Rulfo's conscious reckoning with the political implications of inherited narrative structures—the colonizing nature of the bird's-eye view, for example, or the stigmatization of popular speech through the use of italics—and their creative appropriation of these structures in order to lay bare, resist, and contest colonial models of power active in and through narrative. With the term “activism” I seek to emphasize the *active* role formal narrative structures play in shaping our understanding of the novelistic world. The qualifier “narrative” is also important here: this is not the same kind of activism that takes place in the public sphere and is most visible in the form of demonstrations, strikes, boycotts, and other group actions. I am writing, instead, about the kind of activism that is proper to literature, which I describe as an intervention at the level of individual human subjectivities.

My thinking on the activist potential of literature draws on Jacques Rancière's theory of literary agency as the ability of the literary text to, in a first step, awaken readers to the way in which received categories shape their apprehension of reality. Then, in a second step, literary texts can prompt readers to open themselves to the perception of that which received categories exclude or obscure. Rancière describes politics as “what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the ability to see and the talent to speak” (13). This is what Rancière terms the “distribution of the sensible” (12), elsewhere glossed as “the parceling out of the visible and the invisible” (19). Literary texts intervene in politics by bringing this “parceling out” into readers' awareness and then making a wider span of reality available to readerly perception. Literary works in this way “contribute to the formation of political subjects that challenge the given distribution of the sensible” (40). That is, literary works can awaken us to situations of human oppression, environmental degradation, and other forms of injustice that exist in our midst without our awareness. Once aware of these injustices, we are primed to interact differently with the world, through public and private words and actions bearing witness to a present, yet obscured, layer of reality. In my dissertation, I explore how mid-century authors use discrete elements of literary form in order to attune readers to the hidden politics of both the texts they read and the worlds they inhabit.

Though analysis of form has animated past critical approaches to Arguedas and Rulfo, perhaps most famously in the context of Angel Rama's work, I argue that prior critics have nevertheless not been formalist enough in their method. The tools of narratology, in particular, allow me to engage with textual properties prior critics have overlooked, simplified, and even dismissed as aesthetic lapses or mere cyphers. I work with classical narratology, feminist narratology, and the recently developed field of unnatural narratology to propose a method of reading suited to the nature of mid-century prose works, whose subtle and complex formal properties constitute the very locus of their engagement with pressing political issues. In short, I argue that in order to bring into clear focus the political stakes, ambitions, and agency of the mid-century tradition, we need an incredibly fine-tuned interpretive lens—one furnished by narratology.

My study of mid-century fiction is perhaps most influenced by feminist narratology, which critiques the positivist project of classical narratology by seeking to understand how narrative structures always align with political projects: naturalizing or defamiliarizing structures of power, reinforcing or interrupting hegemonic constructions of racial or class identity. Feminist narratology calls attention to how these operations interact in dynamic ways with readers' conceptual relationships to dominant and subaltern social groups. Feminist narratologist Susan Sniader Lanser, for example, highlights the importance of analyzing the "deep structure" of narrative voice in order to understand what ideological alliances shape the narrator's presentation of the narrative world, in turn influencing readers' apprehension of that world (41). According to Sniader Lanser, classical narratology—in focusing on the enumeration of discrete, quantifiable categories such as autodiegetic vs. heterodiegetic narration—fails to address those properties of narrative voice germane to a text's politics, such as "the gender of the narrator, the speaker's basis for authority, [and] the narrator's 'personality' and values" (5). Sniader Lanser creates a vocabulary for analyzing subtle qualities of narrative voice, enabling readers to bring a text's politics into clearer view.

Sniader Lanser's concept of "stance," or the narrator's relationship to his message "often communicated at very subtle linguistic levels," informs my reinterpretation of the opening chapters of Arguedas's *Yawar Fiesta* (1941) in Chapter One of the dissertation (94). Close attention to the narrator's stance toward Puquio, the Andean town he describes in the first two chapters of the novel, enables me to contest the chapters' characterization by a dominant line of critics as merely providing background information about Puquio's indigenous communities. Through close analysis of the narrator's intimate relationship to the landscape, conveyed through his lyric savoring of each aspect of the town he describes, I argue that this "act of description" in fact constitutes a bold political intervention. Through creating a narrator who deliberately aligns himself, through his affective attachment to the landscape, with the novel's indigenous characters, Arguedas distances himself from his forerunners in the Peruvian *indigenista* tradition, such as Clorinda Matto de Turner and Ciro Alegria, who position their narrators at a distance from, and often above, the indigenous groups they represent. In this way, feminist narratology provides me with a vocabulary and approach that enable me to perceive the operations of a radical politics of form in heretofore unexplored corners of mid-century fiction.

Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of language as packed with layers of socio-political meaning is also central to my understanding of narrative as fundamentally political. For example, when the indigenous-identified narrator of *Yawar Fiesta* describes Puquio as a "pueblo indio," his own attempt to use the term as a positive descriptor comes up against the colonial discourse also in circulation in the novel, according to which "Indian" functions as a synonym for barbaric and dirty. For Bakhtin, language as it emerges spontaneously in the verbal exchanges of everyday life consists of a struggle between different meanings—that is, different denotations and connotations. In a moment of "Discourse in the Novel" that is fundamentally expressive of his social theory of language, Bakhtin points out that "it is not . . . out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!" (294). We can extrapolate from this comment to observe that it is not from literary handbooks that authors get formal categories of narrative such as point-of-view, narrative time, and setting; these categories are laden, as language is, with histories of use

that make them “taste,” to borrow from Bakhtin, of particular ideological uses (293). In my dissertation I explore how Arguedas and Rulfo lay bare the colonial ideology that inheres in past uses of formal categories and create egalitarian, decolonizing structures in their stead. Taken together, Bakhtin and the narratologists allow me to create a rigorous method of working with mid-century prose fiction, through which I demonstrate how Arguedas and Rulfo’s narrative activism emerges from the most basic—and yet most essential—building blocks of language and narrative.

In Chapter One, “José María Arguedas and the Reinvention of Narrative Voice: A New Look at *Yawar Fiesta*”, I argue for the political and literary significance of the narrative voice Arguedas features in the opening chapters of his first novel. A dominant line of criticism has regarded the novel’s opening chapters, in which the narrator introduces the town of Puquio, as problematically anthropological in nature, imperiling the novel’s coherence and aesthetic viability. I argue, on the contrary, that these introductory chapters constitute a highly literary, trenchant critique of basic Western vehicles of representation and communication: the novel and the Spanish language. Through creating a narrator who speaks Quechua-inflected Spanish; who expresses through lyrical descriptions intimate familiarity with and an affective tie to indigenous cultural practices; who critiques the bird’s-eye view perspective—common in the Peruvian novel—as colonizing in nature; and who employs irony to reveal and ultimately dissolve the colonial resonances of seemingly neutral words such as *derecho*, or “straight,” Arguedas expresses a powerful vision of Peruvian literature’s contestatory, decolonizing potential. I argue that Arguedas’s narrator’s lyrical voice participates in the radical reimagining of narrative voice that Rama identifies as a hallmark of mid-century authors’ political project. I describe *Yawar Fiesta*’s narrative voice as embodying a groundbreaking poetics of horizontality, which holds at its center the creation of a communal or democratic mode of third-person narration that works to efface the distinction between narrator and characters—a distinction that, in the Peruvian tradition, has traditionally mapped on to the distinction between dominant and subordinate social groups and the power differential between them. At the same time, this narrative voice works to expose the ideological content of literary forms and even simple words which, sometimes subtly and other times less so, bear the imprint of and reinforce colonial beliefs and practices.

Chapter Two, “The Politics of Description in Arguedas’s *Los ríos profundos*,” complements this focus on narrative voice in Arguedas’s work with analysis of the politics of the sensory body in Arguedas’s second and most celebrated novel, *Los ríos profundos* (1958). I draw attention to a series of unobtrusive diegetic passages in order to show how narrative description reconfigures the reader’s sensory body so that she becomes receptive to the sensory richness of the purportedly abject: excrement, dirt, and rot. I term this alternate sensibility, which undertakes a reclamation of objects, places, and people regarded as dirty and even filthy, “sensory complexity.” I theorize sensory complexity as Arguedas’s daring narrative rejoinder to the image of the “dirty Indian,” a stereotype with a strong hold even on those fighting for indigenous rights in 1950s Peru, as I show in my chapter through cultural and literary histories. I argue that Arguedas depicts sensory complexity as a product of Andean indigenous culture’s ecological sensibility, its valuing of the full cycle of life including not just the rose in full bloom but also its wilting and decay. In a radical and paradoxical way, descriptive passages that

value the abject become a key avenue through which Arguedas values indigenous culture in the novel.

I contextualize this analysis of Arguedas's representation of dirt within a survey of Andean indigenista prose, including novels by César Vallejo, Ciro Alegría, and Jorge Icaza, and the essays of José Uriel García. I demonstrate how the novelists either avoid treating the politically fraught issues of cleanliness and hygiene altogether or represent the "dirty Indian" as the product of the hacienda system itself, while Uriel García relies on Primitivism to redeem the abject, reinscribing the association between dirt and barbarism even as he attempts to characterize it anew. Arguedas avoids this politically fraught discourse of temporality by representing dirt spatially, through the sensory body's experience of material reality. Through his novel, he suggests that "dirty" is an inexact, even meaningless label, obscuring rich sensory experiences available to those willing to adopt an indigenous cultural perspective.

In the second half of my dissertation I turn my attention to Rulfo's prose fiction. Chapter Three, "The Narratee, The Reader, and the Problem of Judgment in Juan Rulfo's '¡Diles que no me maten!'", argues for the crucial, yet widely unacknowledged, role played by the narratee in Juan Rulfo's fiction. The chapter focuses on "¡Diles que no me maten!", a short story from Rulfo's 1953 collection *El llano en llamas*, which narrates a conflict between two neighbors and *compadres* over the use of grazing land. Rulfo represents the conflict and the violence it unleashes—unfolding over multiple generations—in a deeply ambiguous manner: layers of complexity make it impossible to identify one side as in the right and the other as in the wrong. In this way, the story exhibits the ambiguity—dazzling in its literary achievement, disturbing in its implications for a society in pursuit of greater justice—that critics have identified as a hallmark of Rulfo's work.

In my analysis, I focus on an anti-mimetic moment of the story in which Juvencio, one of the two neighbors, interrupts the third-person omniscient narrator (of whom he should not have any awareness, according to the conventions of heterodiegetic narrative) in order to address the narratee, who has remained entirely in the shadows until this moment in the text. Juvencio speaks to the narratee with great urgency, making the case for his release from detention and almost certain execution. I interpret this minimally present narratee as a stand-in for the reader, arguing that through this extraordinary—though not unprecedented in his fiction—breach of realism, Rulfo constructs the reader as judge and assigns her the weighty task of rendering judgment. I go on to analyze the various models for judgment Rulfo provides within the story, focusing in particular on Juvencio's son, the suggestively named Justino, whose gift for perspectival flexibility—the ability to see the conflict between his father and his *compadre* from various points of view—distinguishes him from the other characters in the story, whose perspectival intransigence dooms them to mutual destruction through the code of revenge. I close by considering Justino's passivity as a limitation of his perspectival flexibility, and argue that by constructing the reader as judge, Rulfo suggests the importance of finding a way to move beyond ambiguity to committed action.

In my fourth and final chapter, "Heteroglossia in Latin American Fiction: Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*," I read heteroglossia as a form of narrative activism in Rulfo's 1955 novel. Through my analysis, elaborated with close attention to Bakhtin's "Discourse in the Novel," I work to resolve a contradiction between Ángel Rama's and Roberto

González Echevarría's accounts of *Pedro Páramo* as heteroglossic text. Though Rama does not work directly with Bakhtin's theory, his account of Rulfo as a transculturator portrays Rulfo's fiction as embodying and blending multiple social and literary languages in a way that resonates with Bakhtin's theory of the novel as heteroglossic text. Rama argues that this blending of social languages enables Rulfo to create egalitarian modes of narration, which he mobilizes in order to transform the literary portrayal of regional cultures. González Echevarría, in contrast, characterizes Rulfo's novel as allegorizing the obsolescence—and thus basic powerlessness—of Latin American narrative. Classifying *Pedro Páramo* as an “archival fiction,” González Echevarría describes it as a heteroglossic text that collects and exhibits representational practices that have been used to narrate Latin America's history and identity. In a Foucauldian manner, González Echevarría describes the mid-century novel as exposing the reliance of these representational practices on discourses of power (law, science, and anthropology), so that Latin American narrative, instead of telling us about Latin America, only reflects the master-narratives created by these discourses. In this way, while for Rama, Rulfo's fiction constitutes a representational breakthrough, replacing colonizing narrative structures with pluralistic ones, for González Echevarría, Rulfo's fiction expresses Latin American narrative's coming to terms with its essential nature as a mirror for the region's controlling discourses.

In the chapter, I suggest that both kinds of representation can be found in *Pedro Páramo*: some fragments feature the preprocessed, highly conventionalized modes of representation González Echevarría identifies in Rulfo's work, while others feature the new modes of representation Rama celebrates, which seek to transform the Latin American novel into a more egalitarian, pluralistic literary form. Drawing on Bakhtin's theory of the novel as a “system of languages,” I analyze how Rulfo juxtaposes these different modes of representation in *Pedro Páramo* as a way of prompting reflection on the different possibilities of artistic mediation: its potential for reinforcing hegemonic constructions of identity and history, as well as for undermining them. As an example of this subversive mode of representation, I call attention to what I term the “micro-portrait” in *Pedro Páramo*. The micro-portrait is a narrative strategy by way of which Rulfo brings voices of social Others into the Latin American novel under new, more egalitarian terms. Through the micro-portrait—a dense, layered mode of representing, in limited space, the inner life of minor characters—I argue that Rulfo creates a new way to value minor voices in the novel. In this way, *Pedro Páramo* participates in the poetics of the minor that connects all the mid-century literary texts analyzed in this dissertation, whereby small, seemingly marginal details of mid-century fiction illuminate authors' political commitments in unexpectedly powerful ways.

Chapter One

José María Arguedas and the Reinvention of Narrative Voice: A New Look at *Yawar Fiesta*

“Pueblo indio” (“Indian Town”)⁴, the opening chapter of José María Arguedas’s 1941 novel *Yawar Fiesta*, is full of intricate detail. The narrator describes the physical and cultural features of Puquio, detailing the course of its rivers, the organization of its neighborhoods, the peculiarity of some of its streets, and the activities of its occupants. At first, the reader might focus on this background information at the expense of attending to the chapter’s myriad formal peculiarities. A more prolonged reading, however, connects us with the chapter’s more transcendent and ambitious work: its creation of a new kind of narrative voice.

Critics who have written about *Yawar Fiesta* have not failed to comment on the oddity of its two opening chapters, “Pueblo indio” and “El despojo” (“The Dispossession”). Both impart much information about the story world, but seem to hold the reader at its threshold until Chapter III, where the novel’s plot finally begins to emerge: the struggle over the future of the annual “Yawar fiesta,” or local bullfight, in Puquio. Critics characterize the two opening chapters as constituting a kind of liminal space, situated at the same time within and without the novel’s scope. Antonio Cornejo Polar describes them as a “prólogo explicativo” (“explanatory prologue”)⁵ suggesting that rather than forming an integral part of the novel they function as a kind of introductory primer on the Peruvian Andes, helpful to those readers for whom “el mundo novelesco es ajeno y misterioso” (“the novelistic world is alien and mysterious”; *Universos narrativos* 62). By going on to compare them to footnotes—“se trata de una situación similar a la que explica la presencia de notas a pie de página con función de glosario” (“it is a situation similar to that which might explain the presence of footnotes serving the purpose of a glossary”)—Cornejo Polar reinforces the image of the contents of the novel’s opening as occupying a different space—the margins of the text, rather than its center—than the contents of Chapters III through XI (62).

Like Cornejo Polar I will approach the opening chapters as an introductory space in the novel, a kind of vestibule, but rather than seeing them as inessential texts—helpful to some readers but not to others, somewhat skippable in the manner of a glossary-like footnote—I will read them as sites of highly concentrated literary reflection and innovation that has been too often overlooked. “Pueblo indio,” in particular, is a highly self-reflexive chapter concerned not just with the social mechanics of Puquio, but with the mechanics of representation itself and how those mechanics have historically reproduced, in the structure of the novel-form, broader patterns of social domination and marginalization. This interpretation is admittedly unorthodox. A strong line of critical texts, ranging from Cornejo Polar’s landmark 1973 study of *Yawar Fiesta* to Misha Kokotovic’s 2006 essay on the novel, have characterized the novel’s opening chapters as

⁴ All translations of Arguedas’s *Yawar Fiesta*, *Los ríos profundos*, and “La novela y el problema de la expresión literaria en el Perú” are from Frances Horning Barraclough’s English translations unless otherwise noted.

⁵ All translations of Spanish criticism and theory are my own unless otherwise noted.

providing little more than background information about the town of Puquio, Peru. My own analysis follows and extends a minor strain of criticism, represented by critics such as Anne Lambright and Sara Castro Klarén, that has sought to reckon with the significance of these two curious chapters, rather than merely write them off as “una descripción etnográfica de Puquio,” thus foreclosing on the need for intensive formal analysis (Kokotovic 44). My work will differ from Lambright and Klarén’s, however, in that I will make the novel’s opening chapter the very centerpiece of my analysis. *Yawar Fiesta* is Arguedas’s first full-length novel, and I suggest we interpret his lingering at its threshold as deliberate and formally innovative.⁶ Arguedas uses this space, I argue, in order to reinvent the voice of the third-person omniscient narrator as it exists within the Peruvian novelistic tradition, and particularly the regional and indigenista movements with which it is associated, working out how to responsibly wield this voice’s potentially great power.

As theorists of the Latin American novel have observed, the regional and indigenista novel, up until the intervention of a new generation of authors at the mid-century moment, tends to feature a narrator who establishes himself as an outside observer of indigenous culture. In *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, Angel Rama explains how this tendency expresses itself through the creation of two levels of language within the novel; the author creates a clear class and cultural distinction between the novel’s narrator and its (indigenous or rural) characters by representing the latter’s dialect phonetically, and often in italics (48-50). In the context of an argument about the discursive parallels between the regionalist novel and anthropology, Roberto González Echeverría’s *Myth and Archive* compares the regionalist or telluric novel to ethnography: “These novels are concerned with myth religion, magic, language, genealogy, the impact of modern modes of production on traditional societies, retentions from earlier periods, in short, with the totality of a culture viewed and described from the outside, often through a narrator who follows a protagonist traveling to the jungle, the *llano* or the *pampa*” (155). Narrators from the regionalist and indigenista novel—examples range from Clorinda Matto de Turner’s pioneering *Aves sin nido* (1889) to Ciro Alegria’s much later *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* (published in the same year as *Yawar Fiesta*, 1941)—establish themselves as allies of indigenous Peruvians, and even defenders of the value of the cultures and traditions they depict in their novels, but always alongside an insistence on their own status as educated, cosmopolitan subjects. This

⁶ Arguedas himself does not make this same distinction between *Yawar Fiesta* and *Agua* (1935), a collection of stories that comprises his first book-length publication. In his essay “La novela y el problema de la expresión literaria en el Perú” (“The Novel and the Problem of Literary Expression in Peru”) he refers to both *Yawar Fiesta* and *Agua* as “novelas” (“novels”; 165). Nevertheless, I argue that this distinction is an important one—one that even Arguedas might acknowledge irrespective of nomenclature—because the novel is clearly a genre of great prestige at this point in the development of the Latin American literary tradition. In “La novela y el problema de la expresión literaria en el Perú” Arguedas cites Vallejo’s *Tungsteno* and Güiraldes’s *Don Segundo Sombra* as his literary inspirations and in his own career trajectory moves largely toward longer and more involved novels as he matures. The movement from short story to full-length novel is undoubtedly a significant one for Arguedas, whose career might be interpreted as a search for the way to write a narrative with sufficient density and complexity to be equal to the task of representing life in Peru. At the same time, we might also see the “choppiness” of *Yawar Fiesta*’s opening as a vestige of his former work as writer of short stories. At this point he is almost between the two genres (the brevity of *Yawar Fiesta* also suggests this).

insistence betrays an anxiety that they not be confused with the groups they represent—an anxiety that can be traced back to the author, Rama argues (48-49).

The narrator of *El mundo es ancho y ajeno*, for example, follows up his celebratory portrayal of indigenous protagonist Rosendo Maqui with a typical qualification: though Rosendo is a wise, just, and capable leader of the town of Rumi, he is also, from another perspective, the almost ridiculous product of a heretical blend of beliefs:

[Q]uizá el lector se pregunte: <<¿Qué desorden es éste? ¿Qué significa, entre otras cosas, esta mezcla de catolicismo, superstición, panteísmo e idolatría?>> Responderemos que todos podemos darnos razón, porque la tenemos a nuestro modo, inclusive Rosendo. Compleja es su alma. En ella no acaban de fundirse--y no ocurrirá pronto, midiendo el tiempo en centurias--las corrientes que confluyen desde muchos tiempos y muchos mundos. (44)

Up to this point, the narrator has described Rosendo's practices and beliefs without labels or judgment. In this passage, however, they become an incongruous mixture of "catolicismo, superstición, panteísmo e idolatría." Though the narrator imputes these reservations to the reader and thus distances himself from their negative charge, he communicates through this passage his own socio-cultural position: he, unlike the protagonist, is capable of situating Rosendo's world view and way of life within a broad, modern understanding of world history, religion and science. The narrator gestures briefly toward a claim of cultural relativism that would put indigenous and Western cultures on par—"Responderemos que todos podemos darnos razón, porque la tenemos a nuestro modo, inclusive Rosendo"—but then steps away from it when he describes the cultural influences that constitute Rosendo's culture as "corrientes" that "no acaban de fundirse." The metaphor typifies indigenous culture as an awkward hodgepodge of disparate cultures rather than a legitimate, coherent body of beliefs and practices.

Passages such as these establish what Susan Sniader Lanser in *The Narrative Act* terms narrators' "diegetic authority," which corresponds more or less to their "social identity" within the world of the novel (224). Sniader Lanser breaks this down into race, gender, and social class, but leaves room for additional relevant information that helps us locate the narrator on a social and ideological map (224). These characteristics influence the authority that readers attribute to a particular narrative voice. In Alegría's novel, as well as other examples from the Peruvian indigenista and regional traditions, narrators attempt to gain credibility with their readers by situating their stated respect or admiration for elements of indigenous culture within a broader display of their own belonging to modern, urban, cosmopolitan culture—a culture to which their intended readers also belong. In other words, they balance politically progressive beliefs in the value of indigenous cultures with reassurance to their readers that they themselves speak from a position—educated, urban, cultured—from which indigenous culture looks, at final examination, archaic, limiting, and often naive. In this way, they simultaneously challenge and reinforce the status quo, elevating the status of Indians in readers' minds while keeping in place hierarchies that limit the scope of their intervention.

The narrator who opens Arguedas's *Yawar Fiesta*, however, seeks to positively impact his status with readers through a new kind of appeal. He works to gain credibility with the reader through a discourse that emphasizes proximity to indigenous culture rather than distance from it. He reveals his intimate connection to indigenous culture in lyrical passages celebrating the distinctive aesthetic that organizes indigenous towns as well as the traditions that structure life within them. He seeks to make the reader his ally in celebrating indigenous culture through vivid rendering of the power and beauty of indigenous lifeways, without qualifications as to their inconsistencies or vulnerabilities in the face of modern life. His claim to authority also has an ethical component: he places himself close to, and sometimes among, indigenous groups dispossessed of their lands by exploitative landowners backed by state power. Peruvian narrators in the politically engaged novelistic tradition I am tracing have traditionally exposed and condemned the abuses of these landowners, but have done so from the position of a third party, occupying a position outside of the groups of exploiters and exploited. Arguedas's narrator happily folds himself in among the indigenous communities he represents, peppering his speech with non-standard Spanish meant to evoke their Quechua and often speaking in concert with their voices. The narrator's authority rests on the legitimacy of indigenous perspectives as a source for understanding Peruvian history and cultural dynamics, without seeking recourse in Western, urban culture as a definitive interpretive and evaluative lens. In these ways, Arguedas works to efface the distinction between narrator and characters—a distinction that, in the Peruvian tradition, has traditionally mapped on to the distinction between dominant and subordinate social groups and the power differential between them.

In "Pueblo indio," Arguedas deploys a series of narrative maneuvers that, working in concert with the above-mentioned strategies for reconfiguring narratorial authority, contribute to his interrogation and reformulation of narrative voice. The narrator exposes the politically suspect uses to which specific narrative structures, such as the bird's-eye view, have historically been put. He works to assign positive meanings to words and phrases that have been used in prejudicial contexts. Through these techniques, Arguedas works to expose the ideological content of literary forms that, sometimes subtly and other times less so, bear the imprint of and reinforce colonial beliefs and practices. Arguedas endeavors to generate forms of storytelling that avoid these effects. This unorthodox narrative behavior will not carry through the novel as a whole; after the first two chapters, Arguedas employs what Seymour Chatman in *Story and Discourse* calls a "covert" narrator, or one who "speak[s] of events, characters, and setting" but "remains hidden in the discursive shadows" (197). The narrator fades into the background as the conflict between the different social groups that comprise Puquio become the novel's focal point. Nevertheless, the novel's opening and in particular the first chapter constitute a critical intervention in the reinvention of the narrator at mid-century, with important consequences for the horizon of narrative possibilities that opens for prose artists in Latin America during the 1940s and 50s.

Vision and Voice in “Pueblo indio”: Toward a Poetics of Horizontality

When “Pueblo indio” begins we are up above Puquio, interpreting the town’s topography with the narrator as our guide. The narrator teaches us to read the social divisions of the town through the materials used to construct roofs: “tejas” (“tiles”) indicate the homes of the “indios,” while “calamina” (“corrugated tin”) finishes off the homes of the “principales,” the wealthy townspeople of European descent (7; Barraclough 1). Additionally, the narrator points out that though the *principales* line their houses up along a single street, Bolívar, the indigenous residents tuck their homes in among farms and fields in a more haphazard fashion, unconcerned with straight lines or pattern.

This vantage point—the bird’s-eye view—is familiar to us and would be familiar to early readers of Arguedas’s novel. It is the same vantage point that opens Clorinda Matto de Turner’s early indigenista novel, *Aves sin nido* (“Birds Without a Nest”; 1889). In fact, Matto de Turner also begins her novel by distinguishing between the houses with “techumbre de teja colorada, cocida al horno, y la simplemente de paja con alares de palo sin labrar,” attributing the former structures, referred to as “*casa[s]*” to the “*notables*” and the latter, termed “*choza[s]*” to the “*naturales*” (5, emphasis in original). In her novel, however, Matto de Turner uses this distinction to bring into relief the indigenous homes’ primitivism: they are not houses, but huts, and the narrator describes them through lack: “con alares de palo *sin labrar*” (my emphasis). In both cases, however, the narrators initially employ this vantage point toward didactic ends. Their placement above and at a distance from the towns they describe enables them to point out elements of its organization that would be harder to discern within the towns themselves. The perch provides them and their readers with an epistemological advantage.

The bird’s-eye view is not ideologically neutral, but neither is the power dynamic it sets up between seer, seen, and reader easy to explicate. On the one hand, because it provides visual access to a wide swath of space, revealing details and patterns not visible from below, this privileged vantage point generates a sense of visual mastery: the occupant of the bird’s-eye view can claim that she enjoys the most complete and therefore true perspective on a space. And because, within prose fiction, it is a space traditionally inhabited by the narrator and not by other characters—indeed, usually it is not a real or inhabitable space at all—it can serve as the originating space of a discourse not easily challenged. On the other hand, the interpretations spun from this vantage point suffer critical vulnerabilities. In her analysis of the opening passages of *Yawar Fiesta* in *Creating the Hybrid Intellectual*, Anne Lambright draws on Michel de Certeau in order to theorize the view from above as the fallacious perspective of an observer-outsider who overlays the real lived practices below him with an “alienated” reading of the city as text (77). Lambright emphasizes the “great difference between the text that is theorized (and never very accurately) by the observer from above and that created by the inhabitants below, in their daily maneuvering throughout the city” (77). In this account of bird’s-eye view, the purportedly privileged perspective necessarily generates misreadings. The accuracy of these readings, however, is immaterial—or so suggests Amy Fass Emery in her study of the dynamics of looking in Arguedas’s oeuvre. Emery describes the “panoramic perspective” as “a compensatory strategy that empowers the narrator, that allows him to overcome his alienated perspective as an outsider by giving it a structure he

commands . . . from a controlling distance” (51). The narrator, according to Emery, has the power to exchange alienation for mastery: he can depict his distance as a privilege that enables him to see things with greater accuracy, even if the opposite is true.

Yawar Fiesta's narrative intervenes in the normal functioning of this convention. The narration lays claim to the view from above as a site of visual mastery, using it to usher forth a controlling discourse, nor unmasks it as a vantage point that necessarily produces misinterpretations. Rather, it reveals that in Puquio the bird's-eye view, far from being a fiction of the novel form accessible to the narrator but denied to the story's characters, is instead a real, material vantage point that is the exclusive purview of indigenous residents of *pueblos indios* like Puquio:

Pero en la costa no hay abras, ellos no conocen sus pueblos desde lejos. Apenas si en las carreteras los presienten, porque los caminos se hacen más anchos cuando la ciudad está cerca, o por la fachada de una hacienda próxima, por la alegría del corazón que conoce las distancias. ¡Ver a nuestro pueblo desde una abra, desde una cumbre donde hay saywas de piedra, y tocar en quena o charango, o en rondín, un huayno de llegada! Ver a nuestro pueblo desde arriba, mirar su torre blanca de cal y canto, mirar el techo rojo de las casas, sobre la ladera, en la loma o en la quebrada, los techos donde brillan anchas rayas de cal; mirar en el cielo del pueblo, volando, a los killinchos y a los gavilanes negros, y a veces al cóndor que tiende sus alas grandes en el viento oír el canto de los gallos y el ladrido de los perros que cuidan los corrales. Y sentarse un rato en la cumbre para cantar la alegría. Eso no pueden hacer los que viven en los pueblos de la costa. (7-8)

But on the coast there are no mountain passes. They do not know how their towns look from afar. A mere inkling of it they get on the highways because the roads widen when a town is close by, or from the look of the facade of a nearby hacienda, from the joy of the heart that is familiar with distance. To see our town from a pass, from a mountaintop where there are magic heaps of stones the travelers leave, and to play an arrival *huayno* on a *quena* or *charango* or on a harmonica! To see our town from above, to look at its white tower of stone and lime, to look at the red housetops along the slopes, on the hill or in the valley, where roofs glitter with wide streaks of lime; to look at the kestrels and black hawks soaring in the sky over the town, and now and again a condor who spreads his great wings to the wind; sometimes to hear the crowing of roosters and the barking of dogs who watch the corrals. And to sit for a while on the mountaintop to sing with joy. This is something those who live in the coastal towns cannot do. (2)⁷

⁷ I modified Horning Barraclough's translation in this passage to restore the repetition of "Ver a nuestro pueblo" at the outset of the two lengthy sentences in the middle of the paragraph. I replaced Horning Barraclough's "To look down upon our town" at the beginning of the second sentence with "To see our town from above" so that it would echo "To see our town from a pass." Likewise, I replaced the verbs "gaze," "see," and "watch" with "look" in order to recreate in English the anaphora of the Spanish text.

Arguedas disarms the Western tradition of the bird's-eye view by replacing it, abruptly, with what he represents as the function of the view from above in indigenous Andean society. A distinguishing characteristic of mountain towns, the narrator asserts, is their ability to offer views from afar and from above—views unavailable to residents of other geographic regions of Peru and specifically those of flat coastal areas. Speaking alongside the *comuneros*, or members of the indigenous community, as signaled by his repeated use of the phrase “nuestro pueblo” (“our town”), the narrator connects the view from above to a powerful affective experience: celebrating the appearance of one's home upon returning from an absence. This experience is also aesthetic: the returning residents stop to admire the town's mixture of colors (the “torre blanca de cal y canto” [“white tower of stone and lime”], the “techo rojo de las casas” [“red housetops”]), its shiny roofs, and the flight of birds above. This account serves as a rejoinder to the coastal visitors' contempt, described by the narrator just prior to this passage, upon observing the irregular placement of the *comuneros*' homes on Puquio's hillside. The narrator challenges their scorn by teaching the reader to see the landscape according to an alternate canon of beauty, one that values the dynamics of color, the sturdiness of structures, and the presence of nature.

Two times in the passage, the narrator describes the experience of sighting the town from above as occasioning music or song. This practice is unavailable to those who live on the coast; they only know the approach of home “porque los caminos se hacen más anchos cuando la ciudad está cerca” (“because the roads widen when a town is closeby”), and so their own excitement must travel through more abstract channels than that of the mountain-dweller, who can glimpse his house in the distance and feel his heart leap in response, and then translate that emotion into music. What is more, residents of the coast have no intuitive space—a mountaintop or pass—in which to celebrate their homecoming. In sum, the passage indicates a discrepancy between how residents of the sierra and those of the coast experience a sense of place, suggesting that the mountains provide the *indios* of Puquio the possibility of developing a different kind of relationship to their land, richer in affect and ritual than that of those who live on the coast.

Through this key passage, the narrator constructs the view from above as part of the lived daily practices of the *comuneros*, a complement to rather than a distortion of real life as it is lived below. A key effect of this move is the flattening of the epistemological hierarchy implicit in the narrator-character relationship in an omnisciently narrated novel. If in earlier indigenista novels such as *Aves sin nido* omniscient narrators have been privileged interpreters of indigenous culture and reality, Arguedas issues an initial challenge to that convention here by making the bird's-eye view accessible to all members of the indigenous community. Arguedas places narrator and characters on the same literal plane, from which they all look down at Puquio together.

This narrative move marks a critical limit to the argument Amy Fass Emery puts forward in *The Anthropological Imagination in Latin American Literature*, where she argues that Arguedas tends to use narrative perspectives in order to “capture and dominate the elusive Other” (44). Fass Emery surveys Arguedas's work from a biographical and disciplinary perspective, examining how Arguedas's life experiences and disciplinary training as an ethnologist imprint themselves on the function of the gaze

in his fiction. Most relevant to my own argument is her contention that he associates “viewing from above with power and mastery,” a habit she argues he acquires from his training in scientific observation as an anthropologist, as well as from his contact with Andean culture itself (46).

Fass Emery leads with the helpful observation that Arguedas “perceived the act of looking . . . not as an innocent, and not as a consistently uplifting, activity, but rather as one fraught with issues of control, mastery, pleasure, pain, and guilt” (46). It is precisely this observation that guides my own argument about narrative perspective in *Yawar Fiesta*: a heightened awareness of the politics of looking pushes Arguedas to disassemble a highly conventional representation mechanics at his novel’s opening and to erect another in its place. As Fass Emery’s argument unfolds, however, she moves away from this initial—and, I would argue, more accurate—depiction of Arguedas as “problematiz[ing] the visual in his work,” and toward a more condemnatory position, from which she lists Arguedas’s, or his narrators’, transgressions as seeing subjects (46). In the process, she gives up the opportunity to trace, as Roberto González Echeverría would say, how Arguedas not only subordinates the fictional text to the conventions of the discursive model that undoubtedly informs his novelistic practice—ethnography—but also exploits the literariness of this genre in order to lay bare and even upend these conventions. As novel theorist Dorothy Hale writes in a different context, “critique or reform is incremental, both limited and propelled by the hegemonic social forces it seeks to overthrow” (“The Eye’s Mind” 539). The most enlightening scholarship is that which, in Hale’s words, “casts no heroes and villains,” but seeks for a more nuanced account of a text’s modes of encounter with the social issues most salient to its author and its simultaneous necessary repetition of perspectives dominant in the cultural milieu on which it feeds and which it, in turn, will shape (539).

It is hardly incidental that at the outset of his first novel Arguedas reorganizes the conventional relationship between seer and seen. The view from above functions as an apt spatial metaphor for the creation of indigenista texts—whether essays published in journals like Mariátegui’s *Amauta* or novels—that seek to describe cultures from the outside and in some senses, “above.” This perspective is one Arguedas seeks to elude in his own writings largely through biography: though he was not born to an indigenous family, he spent formative years living among an indigenous group and speaking primarily Quechua. Due to this experience, he constructs himself as uniquely positioned to write about indigenous culture from a closer proximity, and thus with less distortion, than writers who came before him.⁸ Within paragraphs of the outset of *Yawar Fiesta* the narrator—and the reader—find themselves transformed from outside observers looking down on Puquio to the participants at the center of an indigenous ritual, hearing its sounds and seeing its sights from the inside out. This, in miniature, is the journey on which Arguedas aspires to take his reader.

Arguedas accompanies this play with visuality with equally significant experimentation with voice. At precisely the moment the narrator shuts down the bird’s-eye view, he releases full force a voice whose emotion and lyricism take the reader by surprise. In the passage quoted above, this new voice emerges with the two sentences that begin “Ver a nuestro pueblo” (“To see our town”). Both convey the experience of an

⁸ His famed speech, “No soy un aculturado” (“I Am Not Acculturated”), provides a succinct account of this claim.

inhabited subjectivity—the narrator’s subjectivity, which readers come likewise to feel is their own—within the landscape. The drama of the voice’s expression comes from its transition to the lyric mode.

As he does often in his novels, Arugedas signals this transition through the use of a particular sentence structure—what we might call the “Arguedas sentence” because it emerges at critical moments of his novelistic and ethnographic prose—featuring a large number of stacked-up clauses separated by commas and semicolons. These sentences tend to be lengthy, the proliferation of clauses communicating a sense of abundance and breathless celebration. Here Arguedas weaves repetition into the clauses (“mirar su torre blanca . . . mirar el techo rojo de las casas . . . mirar en el cielo del pueblo, volando, a los killinchos” [“to look at its white tower . . . to look at the red housetops . . . to look at the kestrels and black hawks soaring in the sky”]) in order to generate rhythm within the passage. By lavishing attention on each detail of the town—from humble rooftop to majestic gliding birds—the narrator communicates tenderness and awe. His voice acquires an enraptured tone as he makes plain his attachment to the landscape, deliberately aligning himself through his affect with the novel’s indigenous characters. The tone contrasts with the attitude of the mostly neutral-sounding, even observer who opens the chapter. The narrator thus displays his discomfort with hierarchies and demonstrates, once again, his preference for the communal.

This passage signals a change in what Susan Sniader Lanser in *The Narrative Act* refers to as “stance,” or “the speaker’s relationship to the message s/he is uttering” (92). In particular, “stance involves both ideological and psychological attitudes toward a given ‘content’” on the part of the narrator, and plays a large part in “determin[ing] the emotional and ideological response the audience will take from, and bring to, the discourse” (93). Though the reader has received subtle hints before this point as to the narrator’s affection for Puquio and his allegiances in the town’s social conflicts, in this passage these elements of the narrator’s stance are roundly confirmed. A bit more subtle but ultimately more significant is the narrator’s renouncement of epistemological privilege: he constructs himself as the equal of the characters he will represent. This democratic approach to storytelling makes itself manifest in one of the chapter’s strangest characteristics: as the narrator tells the reader about Puquio, the *comuneros* periodically interrupt his discourse to insert their own pithy reactions. For example, when the narrator describes the *mistis’* attempts to gain control over Puquio’s water through intimidating, incarcerating, and even attacking the *comuneros*, the voice of the indigenous collectivity breaks in with an insouciant “—¡No empurta!” (“Don’t matter!”), expressing its refusal to be intimidated (13; Barraclough 7). This dynamic suggests an unconventional implied narrative context in which the *comuneros* listen in as the narrator tells their story and punctuate the account with their own reactions. The narrator extends this invitation to participate in the narration to other social groups too; *mistis* and “forasteros,” or visitors to Puquio, also interrupt the narrator to respond to his depiction of the town. In “Pueblo indio,” the narrator’s speech appears to be ‘public,’ accessible to the story’s characters. This, too, is part of Arguedas’s commitment to the communal over the hierarchical.

As Lanser suggests, *Yawar Fiesta*’s narrator’s stance conditions the reader’s relationship to Puquio and its residents. His attachment to the town, and particularly to its indigenous communities, encourages the reader to develop her own affective ties to their structures and practices, as well as to side with those communities in their conflicts

with the *mistis*. What is more, through dismantling the hierarchy that separates narrator from character in prior Peruvian novels, he encourages the reader to also situate herself in close proximity and in horizontal relation to the indigenous groups he represents.

After the first two chapters, most of *Yawar Fiesta* focuses on the struggle between the indigenous Puquios and the local *misti* government over the threatened discontinuation of the annual “Yawar fiesta” or bullfight, due to its perceived primitivism. Whereas in the opening chapters the narrator is completely dominant—we get almost all diegesis and very little mimesis—in later chapters he becomes more unobtrusive, creating space for the voices of the different social groups represented in the novel to come forth rather than foregrounding his own viewpoints and opinions. His stance becomes neutral and his tone measured. By novel’s end the reader is so involved in the drama of the bullfight that the narrator’s initial intervention—unusual though it might have been—is almost forgotten.

Nevertheless, this is where the novel begins: with an overactive narrative voice, eccentric in many respects. This invites the question, what are we to do with this narrative peculiarity? What is its significance and does it—considering its brevity—have any great significance at all? I submit that “Pueblo indio” indicates that for Arguedas the process of creating literature that challenges the subordinate position of indigenous cultures begins with the question of voice, and, in particular, the voice of the narrator. Arguedas’s alternative narrator mixes subjectivity with objectivity, displays deep affect, and dismantles literary hierarchies in order to challenge social ones. Through these moves, Arguedas’s narrator approaches storytelling differently: he constructs himself as a community member without epistemological privilege who shares the biases and vulnerabilities of the characters he speaks about and with. He foregrounds these elements of his character so as to not repeat the gestures of hegemonic authority he deplors in the implantation of state power. He creates a voice whose diegetic authority is constructed on the basis of the inherent value of an indigenous perspective on Puquio’s past and present, not on claims to distanced objectivity or mastery that, in the Peruvian milieu, can only belong to non-indigenous individuals. It is no surprise that this experimentation with narrative voice is accompanied by the subversion of traditional vantage points for storytelling. The visual and the vocal are the warp and weft of fiction; both modalities hold the power to either reinforce or challenge existing hierarchies. In the passage analyzed here, we see both animated in the interest of reimagining narrative voice in Latin America.

Almost Mistura: The Power of the Agrammatical

Perhaps the most striking feature of *Yawar Fiesta* is the novel’s reworking of the Spanish language. In fact, critical discussion of voice in *Yawar Fiesta* has focused on Arguedas’s use of “mistura” almost to the exclusion of all else. In his 1950 essay “La novela y el problema de la expresión literaria en el Perú” (“The Novel and the Problem of Literary Expression in Peru”) Arguedas describes *mistura* as “un lenguaje castellano especial” (“a special Spanish language”) and “una ficción” (“a fiction”; 172; Barraclough xix).⁹ It is, in essence, a mixture invented by Arguedas of Spanish and Quechua lexicons

⁹ I am using Barraclough’s translation of this essay.

and grammatical structures, often featuring Quechua syntax rendered in Spanish words. In addition, *mistura* employs Quechua words made accessible to the reader through contextual clues or by a glossary sometimes published with the novel. In his 1950 essay, Arguedas describes *mistura* as a technique for registering his Quechua-speaking characters' linguistic difference while keeping his novel accessible to Spanish-speakers.

Mistura is obscure in a few senses; it is challenging to read, and its political and aesthetic ambitions are anything but transparent, as Estelle Tarica points out in *The Inner Life of Mestizo Nationalism*. In surveying Arguedas's private writings and public statements on the literary technique, Tarica concludes that "contradictory statements about [*Yawar Fiesta*] . . . suggest that Arguedas himself did not fully know what he was searching for with *mistura*" (117). The following piece of dialogue from Chapter III provides a good sampling of what the language looks and feels like on the page. In this snippet the *comuneros* attempt to persuade don Julián to put aside his plans to capture a local bull famed for its ferocity: "—¡Amo taytallaya! ¡Vas morir!—les dijeron—. Nu entrandu patrón. Seguro ahí quedarás. Negromayo tu sangre llevará. Chascha comerá tu tripa" ("Master *taytallaya*! You gonna die!' they told them. 'Not going in boss. You're sure to stay in there. Little dog'll eat your guts"; 86; Barraclough 76). In this quotation we see the use of Quechua words and syntax, as well as phonetic renderings of Spanish words as they might be pronounced by Quechua-speakers ("Nu" for "No" and "entrandu" for "entrando," for example). Tarica argues that although Arguedas clearly insists in 1950 that this language is not meant to recreate the way Indians speak, his actual use of the technique contradicts this statement at least in part. For example, Tarica points out that Arguedas's use of phonetic spellings "mimicking a Quechua 'accent' in Spanish" alongside other hallmarks of Spanish as it is spoken by Quechua-speakers indicate to at least some extent what Tarica calls "naturalist" speech (109). In short, as Tarica's analysis makes evident, Arguedas's own statements on *mistura*'s purpose and deployment tend to complicate rather than clarify the concept.

Nevertheless, a brief look at the 1950 essay in which Arguedas discusses *mistura* at some length will give us a sense of the challenges Arguedas was up against as he attempted to write a novel that neither alienated Spanish-speaking readers nor transformed a world Arguedas experienced as intensely saturated by Quechua into what he disparaged as "un mundo como inventado, sin médula y sin sangre, un típico mundo 'literario'" ("an apparently contrived world—marrowless and bloodless . . . a typically 'literary world'"; 169; Barraclough xvii). *Mistura* is Arguedas's answer to the question that, according to his own writings and that of his critics, sits at the center of his novelistic enterprise: "¿Cómo describir esas aldeas, pueblos y campos; en qué idioma narrar su apacible y a la vez inquietante vida?" ("How to describe those villages, towns, and fields; in what language could I write about their placid and at the same time disquieting life?"; 169; xvii). Arguedas chooses Spanish, but rather than crafting a high literary Spanish, he treats the language as "un elemento primario al que [el autor] debe modificar, quitar y poner, hasta convertirlo en un instrumento propio" ("a raw material that [the author] may modify, taking from and adding to it, until he transforms it into his own means of expression"; 170; xvii). Arguedas describes *mistura* as a "raro equilibrio" ("rare balance") between what he describes as a Spanish form and an indigenous content, between faithfulness to the local and a connection to universal themes (170; xviii). The tension between these goals is expressed through Arguedas's description of *mistura* as a

“torrente diáfano y legítimo” (“legitimate and diaphanous torrent”; 170; xviii). Both of these descriptors cut two ways. *Mistura* need be “diaphanous,” letting the indigenous landscapes and lives it depicts shine through the prose as cultural content undistorted by a language foreign to it. But the language must also be close to transparent to its readers—it cannot be so different that it renders the prose illegible. Similarly, the language must be legitimate in the sense that it offers a representation of indigenous life faithful to Arguedas’s experience of it, at the same time that it must, in order to find readers and have the effect on them that Arguedas intends, establish its legitimacy within the literary world. As *mistura* navigates between two languages that history has pitted against one another, so does it navigate between communicative goals and interpretive communities that are often at odds. *Mistura* is a provisional solution to a representational problem faced by a bilingual, bicultural author, but by no means is it a resolution of enduring tensions.

Mistura constitutes a key component of Arguedas’s strategy for reinventing the Latin American novelistic narrator. Because the narrator’s discourse dominates the first two chapters of the novel, his voice is the reader’s first introduction to Arguedas’s linguistic innovations in *Yawar Fiesta*. The innovations on Spanish in “Pueblo indio” are subtle yet palpable. The narrator does not consistently speak a Spanish impacted lexically and syntactically by Quechua to the degree of the “pure” *mistura* we saw above. Nevertheless, the reader detects immediately that the narrator’s Spanish is unusual. The most obvious alterations are the insertions of Quechua words such as *killincho* (“kestrel”) and *ayllu* (“indigenous community”) but the reader also notes the presence of incomplete sentences such as “Tres torres, tres plazas, tres barrios indios” (“Three towers, three squares, three Indian neighborhoods”) and “Pueblo grande, en buen sitio” (“Big town, in a good place”; 8, 12; Barraclough 2, 6). In the second fragment, the narrator also omits two indefinite articles; in standard Spanish the sentence would read “*Un* pueblo grande, *en un* buen sitio.” Arguedas places this sentence at the end of a paragraph, where its flouting of grammatical convention will be especially conspicuous.

A number of sentences also feature unusual syntax, with one notable pattern being the delay of the grammatical subject until the end of the sentence. This is the case with the very first sentence of “Pueblo indio”: “Entre alfalfares, chacras de trigo, de habas y cebada, sobre una lomada desigual, está el pueblo” (“Amid fields of alfalfa and patches of wheat, broad beans and barley, on a rugged hillside lies the town”; 7; Barraclough 1). Arguedas uses a similar structure for one of the most powerful sentences in the chapter, in which the narrator recounts the *ayllus*’ refusal, even in the face of extreme pressure from the state, to give up their power over the region’s water: “Pero el agua no soltaron los ayllus” (“But the water was never let go by the *ayllus*” 13).¹⁰ Both sentences stand alone, constituting full paragraphs in and of themselves and in this way call greater attention to their formal peculiarities. The syntax featured in both sentences resembles neither the most standard Spanish syntax (in twentieth-century prose) of subject-verb-object nor the most common Quechua syntax of subject-object-verb. Rather, Arguedas opts for syntax unusual in both languages. We might read this syntactic dislocation as

¹⁰ I have used my own translation here because Barraclough’s version does not preserve the unusual syntax. Indeed, because it is practically impossible to construct an English sentence featuring a transitive verb according to the object-verb-subject syntax Arguedas uses here, I was forced to render the sentence passive to recreate at least some of the effect of the original.

hyperbaton, or the use of word order to assign special emphasis to particular elements of a sentence. Both sentences privilege nature and agriculture over human presence, placing “alfalfares, chacras de trigo, de habas y cebada” (“fields of alfalfa and patches of wheat, broad beans and barley”) and “agua” (“water”) before “ayllu” and “pueblo.” They communicate through this a valuing of the natural world over and above human communities. In addition, through this unusual sentence structure Arguedas creates and promotes a new syntactic pattern. Tarica argues that Arguedas conceptualized *mistura* as the potential “language of new social actors”; he defined these actors as mestizos who could bring indigenous values and life ways into the larger national culture (*Inner Life* 113). Syntactic forms that remake Spanish altogether might be seen as one manifestation of this newness.

Arguedas uses this non-standard Spanish, what we might call a “sometimes” or “almost” *mistura*, to fold multiple layers of meaning into key moments. For example, “Pero el agua no soltaron los ayllus” (“But the water was never let go by the *ayllus*”) enacts linguistically what it describes referentially. Without shattering the integrity of Spanish grammar, Arguedas finds room to exercise agency within it. He still must describe an indigenous victory in Spanish, the language of the exploitative state, but it is a Spanish he has reworked to both render it strange and reflect indigenous values by foregrounding “agua” as agent and source of life. Though the first two chapters of *Yawar Fiesta* depict even partial subordination to the Peruvian nation-state as devastating to Puquio’s indigenous communities, the larger message of *Yawar Fiesta* is that the state’s presence is irreversible. The best the communities can hope for is to shape it from within to reflect the practices and beliefs of the indigenous cultures it subsumes under its flag. This reshaped Spanish sentence serves as an apt model for this strategy of cultural survival. Tarica describes *mistura* as “a kind of violence on the dominant language, a violence to the language of the state that is consonant with the violent emotions expressed by speakers resisting the institutions of the state” (110). In the case of the narrator’s language, a mediating language situated between indigenous characters and the reader, we might add that the narrator engages Spanish not just with violence, but also with creativity. Through resisting standard Spanish grammatical forms, the narrator generates syntactic patterns that exercise the limits of Spanish grammar and create the language anew.

The significance of the narrator expressing himself through non-standard Spanish comes into focus when we place *Yawar Fiesta* within the context of the larger Latin American literary tradition. In *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, Angel Rama argues that in the early decades of the twentieth century regionalist novelists incorporate local forms of expression into their text “con fines de ambientación realista” (“with the aim of creating a realistic setting”; 48). Authors take pains, however, to quarantine these markers of the regional, including “un léxico regional, deformaciones fonéticas dialectales, y . . . construcciones sintácticas locales” (“a regional lexicon, dialect-specific phonetic deformations, and . . . local syntactic constructions”) by using them almost solely within characters’ dialogue, never allowing them to ‘contaminate’ the narrator’s discourse so that their suggestion of lack of education or cosmopolitanism does not travel back to implicate the author himself (48). Some authors, Rama notes, go so far as condemn regional usage within their narratives; he indicates Marisela’s linguistic education in Rómulo Gallegos’s *Doña Bárbara* (1929) as a case in point. Regional forms

of expression attract Latin American novelists as “una prueba de independencia” (“proof of independence”) from a European literary tradition. At the same time, novelists seek through the voices of their narrators to “confirm lingüísticamente su lugar más elevado, debido a su educación y a su conocimiento de las normas idiomáticas, que lo[s] distancia del bajo pueblo” (“confirm linguistically their more elevated position, due to their education and their knowledge of idiomatic norms, which distance them from common people”; 47, 48-49). The author seeks to be insider enough to mimic regional speech but outsider enough to prove this is not *his* language.

A later group of authors, Arguedas principal among them, does away with this “sistema dual” (“dual system”; Rama 48). These are Rama’s “transculturators,” authors who seek to preserve through novelistic art elements of regional cultures that modernizing efforts make vulnerable to extinction. Rama describes the transculturators as more concerned with representing cultural peripheries from within than proving their own cosmopolitan credentials:

El autor se ha integrado a la comunidad lingüística y habla desde ella, con desembarazado uso de sus recursos idiomáticos. Si esa comunidad es, como ocurre frecuentemente, de tipo rural, o aun colinda con una de tipo indígena, es a partir de su sistema lingüístico que trabaja el escritor, quien no procura imitar desde fuera un habla regional, sino elaborarla desde dentro con una finalidad artística. (51)

The author has integrated himself into the linguistic community and speaks from that community, with free use of its idiomatic resources. If this community is, as frequently occurs, rural in type, or even adjoins an indigenous community, it is from this linguistic system that the writer works, not endeavoring to imitate regional speech from the outside, but rather elaborating it from within according to artistic ends.

In these novels, the narrating voice is a voice from below, often belonging to a rural community or indigenous group. Arguedas’s narrative voice in *Yawar Fiesta* is a prime example of this shift in narration.

A detail from *Yawar Fiesta*’s publication history provides compelling evidence that Arguedas wanted his reader to be confronted from the first by this new kind of narrator. The earliest edition of the novel, published in 1941, begins with a chapter titled “La quebrada” (“The Ravine”) omitted in later editions. “La quebrada” functioned as another introductory chapter to the text, coming just before “Pueblo indio” and focusing principally on Puquio’s natural surroundings. Though it is possible to imagine multiple reasons for the chapter’s suppression—most prominently that “La quebrada” prolonged the already lengthy introductory section of the novel—foremost among these must rank the difference between the narrative voice of “La quebrada” and that of “Pueblo indio.” The narrator in “La quebrada” speaks standard Spanish. By omitting this chapter, Arguedas allows the reader to be hit immediately by the force of a narrator who eschews the prestige of high literary Spanish and the network of values this language activates. He also avoids repeating the practice of establishing standard Spanish as the grounding,

legitimizing, language of the novel before venturing into less “legitimate” forms of expression.

Micro-Struggles: Narrative Intervention at the Level of the Word

While a discussion of *mistura* constitutes a critical component of an analysis of voice in *Yawar Fiesta*, it does not exhaust the topic, nor does it address some of its most critical aspects. In “Voz, memoria y conocimiento en los primeros escritos de José María Arguedas” (“Voice, Memory and Knowledge in the First Writings of José María Arguedas”), William Rowe urges critics to think about but also beyond *mistura* as they contemplate the language of Arguedas’s early writings:

Yo quisiera insistir en otra dimensión del problema, que no es de morfología y sintaxis, sino de la voz, o sea del lugar desde donde se habla. Es un problema que no siempre es fácil de desentrañar, porque para ubicar una voz y sus efectos hay que tomar en cuenta muchos factores, como las estructuras del poder, las instituciones, los discursos. Es precisamente un problema clave para JMA, el etnógrafo no profesional y el novelista influido por la etnografía. ¿Con qué autoridad, con qué legitimidad social, se habla desde la escritura y se escribe desde el habla cuando lo que se propone es romper con las jerarquías existentes? (267)

I would like to insist on another dimension of the problem, which is not about morphology and syntax, but about voice, that is, about the position from which one speaks. It is a problem that is not easy to unravel, because to locate a voice and its effects it is necessary to take many factors into account, such as the structures of power, institutions, discourses. It is precisely a key problem for JMA, the non-professional ethnographer and the novelist influenced by ethnography. With what authority, with what social legitimacy, does one speak from the place of writing and write from the place of speech when the proposal is to break with existing hierarchies?

In this chapter we have seen some of the ways Arguedas uses voice to challenge “estructuras del poder, las instituciones, los discursos” (“structures of power, institutions, discourses”). Throughout “Pueblo indio” he identifies narrative conventions that reproduce, on the level of the text, patterns of social subordination and works to scrub them from his prose. Through creating a narrator who moves between subjectivity and objectivity, who establishes relationships of horizontality with characters, who creates openings for those characters to intercede in his discourse, and who foregrounds his own passions and preferences to make clear (rather than obscure) his own fallibility and the subject position from which he speaks, Arguedas indeed works to “romper con las jerarquías existentes” (“break with existing hierarchies”). These narrative strategies work in concert with the narrator’s use of non-standard Spanish, which besides strengthening the alliance between the narrator and the Quechua-speaking characters in his novel,

demonstrates the power and even the poetry of the agrammatical. Whether the formulations are a fiction invented by Arguedas or a representation of Spanish spoken by those for whom Quechua is a native tongue, Arguedas ennobles these creative forms of the language by putting them in the mouth of his narrator.

In addition to these experiments with large-scale narrative elements, Arguedas mobilizes narrative voice to carry out political work at the level of the individual word. In “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin theorizes the volatility of the word: “Within the arena of almost every utterance an intense interaction and struggle between one’s own word and another’s word is being waged, a process in which they oppose or dialogically interanimate each other” (354). On this view, when the narrator utters a word or short phrase, such as “pueblo indio,” for example, he cannot have complete control over the associations that phrase will release. Depending on the status of the word in the reader’s contemporary discourse, and depending on the contextualization of that word so far in the literary text, it might carry a positive or negative charge, or, more likely, a measure of each. In *Yawar Fiesta* the narrator works to encode key words and phrases such as “pueblo indio” with positive meanings, reclaiming them from their use in prejudicial contexts. He engages, in short, in a process of resemanticization intended to challenge the discursive legacy of colonialism. In addition, through the operations of his narrative voice, Arguedas exposes how seemingly innocuous terms such as “straight” can be the most toxic words of all, hiding dense webs of associations justifying colonial discourses and actions beneath seemingly neutral surfaces.

A key site at which to analyze this aspect of voice is the discussion of streets that runs throughout “Pueblo indio,” part obsession and part running-joke. The narrator juxtaposes the indigenous tolerance, even preference, for irregular and unpredictable streets with the *misti* obsession for straight, consistent streets. The imposition of straight streets becomes a figure for both the colonial past of Puquio and the conflictive present, symbolizing the interruption of indigenous sovereignty in Puquio as well as the encounter of two modes of spatial arrangement that represent clashing ways of inhabiting the land and clashing aesthetics (12). Through his discourse, the narrator defamiliarizes the modern urban preference for straight, consistent streets for the reader—a reader who in her everyday life is probably most familiar with this model of spatial organization.¹¹

In essence, the chapter stages a struggle over the connotations of “straightness.” In the original Spanish, Arguedas uses the words “derecho” and “recto” for “straight,” as in “Pero las calles son *derechas*, las que están en cuesta y en plano, todas son *derechas*” (“But the streets are *straight*; the steep ones and the level ones are all *straight*”) and “Había que ir *recto*. Calle de *mistis* es siempre *derecha*” (“It had to go in a *straight* line. *Misti* street is always *straight*”; 10, 12; Barraclough 4, 6; my emphasis). These words for geometric straightness feature many of the same secondary definitions as “straight” does in English. Both “derecho” and “recto” signify honesty or uprightness. “Derecho” carries the additional meaning of “law” and “justice.” “Recto” also means “proper” as in “in the proper meaning of the word” (“en el sentido recto de la palabra”).¹² As such, both words go beyond neutrally describing a physical attribute: they associate geometric straightness that which is honest, upright, legal, just, and proper. Through his discourse,

¹¹ As Cornejo Polar points out in *La novela indigenista*, the indigenista novel is written *about* the indigenous world but *for* a non-indigenous readership.

¹² All definitions come from the Harper Collins Spanish Unabridged Dictionary, 6th Edition

however, the narrator interrupts the equation of straight streets with these positive values. In the process of doing so he upends a series of conceptual associations with straight streets, such as their connection with the concepts of civilization, culture, and rationality. In lieu of these associations, the narrator leads the reader to connect straight streets to injustice, violence, exploitation, irrationality, and senseless rigidity.

The narrator begins to contrast the *misti* and *comunero* preferences for organizing space on the first page of “Pueblo indio,” where he compares the homes of the *principales* lined up next to one another on the girón Bolívar to those of the *comuneros*, tucked into the “faldas del cerro, casi sin calles, entre chacras de cebada” (“mountain flanks, almost without streets, amid barley fields”; 7; Barraclough 1). In the following pages he fleshes out this contrast, describing in further detail the method by which, in the absence of streets, the *comuneros* place their homes within the landscape. In essence, they choose a spot that appeals to them: “No hay calles verdaderas en ningún sitio; los comuneros han levantado sus casas, según su interés, en cualquier parte, sobre la laderita, en buen sitio” (“There are no real streets anywhere; the *comuneros* have put up their houses any place that suited them: on a little slope, in a good place”; 8; Barraclough 2). This is a positive account of an alternate method of organizing space that counters the negative reaction of the visitors from the coast who express disdain upon seeing the “disorganized” town. The description of Puquío’s indigenous spaces continues with an account of the streets it does have:

Toda la ladera llena de casas y corrales; a ratos el viajero se encuentra con calles torcidas, anchas en un sitio, angostas en otro; la calle desaparece cortada por un canchón de habas o cebada y vuelve a aparecer más allá. El viajero sube la lomada, saltando de trecho en trecho acequias de agua orilladas por romazales y pasto verde. (9)

The whole slope is full of houses and corrals; occasionally the traveler comes upon winding streets, wide in one place, narrow in another; the street disappears where it is cut off by a bean or barley field and reappears farther along. The traveler climbs the hill, now and then leaping over irrigation ditches lined with sorrel and green grass. (3)

Eluding straight lines, these streets respond to the contours of the valley’s topography, the placement of crop fields and irrigation ditches, and the arrangement of homes and animal pens on the hill.

Though Arguedas never makes the comparison directly, this chapter and its situation within Arguedas’s oeuvre in general lead the reader to contrast the insistent straightness of the *mistis*’ streets to the meandering lengths of the Andean rivers that figure so prominently in Arguedas’s description of Puquío and which play a key role in *Los ríos profundos*. The narrator’s description of Puquío, rooted in indigenous values, begins with an account of the “tres riachuelos” (“three streams”) that run through the town and organize its space—only following this account do we hear about the town itself (7; Barraclough 1). The indigenous streets behave something like rivers, winding their way through the landscape, widening and narrowing, ending and then picking up

again as waterways might as they duck briefly underground to spring up once more twenty yards downstream.

All this stands in marked contrast to the section of the town created by the *mistis*, organized around the girón Bolívar, “[c]alle larga, angosta, bien cuidada, con aceras de piedra pulida” (“A long, narrow, well-kept street with sidewalks of polished stone”; 9; Barraclough 3). This zone of Puquío, the narrator emphasizes, features straight streets: “Las calles son angostas; por las noches, los gatos, cuando se persiguen, saltan por lo alto, de techo a techo. Pero las calles son derechas, las que están en cuesta y en plano, todas son derechas” (“The streets are narrow; at night, when they chase one another, the cats leap across from one roof to another. But the streets are straight, the steep ones and the level ones are all straight”; 10; Barraclough 4). The narrator takes pains to explain that not just some but all—those on flatlands and those on hillsides—of the streets are straight. Here the obsession with straightness trumps the dictates of topography.

“Pueblo indio” recounts a brief history of Puquío’s colonization, and the narrator puts the construction of straight streets right at the center, as important as the arrival of the priest and the construction of the Plaza de Armas:

Los mistis fueron con su Cura, con su Niño Dios ‘extranguero’, hicieron su plaza de Armas en el canto del pueblo; mandaron hacer su iglesia, con puerta de arco y altar dorado; y de ahí, desde su plaza, como quien abre acequia, fueron levantando su calle, sin respetar la pertenencia de los ayllus.

--¡Qué ni qué!

Había que ir recto. Calle de mistis es siempre derecha. (12)

The *mistis* went with their priest, with their “foreigner” Child God; they made their Plaza de Armas on the edge of town; they ordered a church to be built for them with arched portal and gilded altar; and from there, from their Plaza, like someone who is digging a ditch, they went on building their street, with no respect for the ownership claims of the *ayllus*.

“So what!”

It had to go in a straight line. *Misti* street is always straight. (6)

The description here of the *misti* colonization of Puquío, and particularly the construction of the streets “sin respetar la pertenencia de los ayllus” (“with no respect for the ownership claims of the *ayllus*”) chimes with Mary Louise Pratt’s study of European colonization of southern Africa in the eighteenth century. As Pratt argues, imperial powers justify colonization through discourses that depict foreign lands as “available for improvement”:

The European improving eye produces subsistence habitats as ‘empty’ landscapes, meaningful only in terms of a capitalist future and of their potential for producing a marketable surplus. From the point of view of their inhabitants, of course, these same spaces are lived as intensely humanized, saturated with local history and meaning, where plants,

creators, and geographical formations have names, uses, symbolic functions, histories, places in indigenous knowledge formations. (61)

The “subsistence habitat” of Puquio, whose “local history and meaning” is perhaps illegible or invisible to its *misti* colonizers, is overlaid—“improved”—with the introduction of a plaza, church, and, finally, a main street, the *sine qua non* of modern urban space, ready to be lined by stores, bars, and homes—spaces where money can be spent and enjoyed. The story of Puquio’s colonization is compressed here into a single sentence whose tone is somber with a trace of bewilderment. The streets are carved out of the land by the *mistis* “como quien abre acequia” (“like someone who is digging a ditch”), the narrator tells us, but in the case of an *acequia*, or irrigation ditch, the placement of the structure serves an obvious purpose: the irrigation of crops. The *mistis*’ street, on the other hand, serves a much more abstract, symbolic purpose, making its violation of *ayllu* property lines that much more bewildering and troubling.

The narrator’s tone turns ironic in the last sentence of the short passage: “Había que ir recto. Calle de mistis es siempre derecha” (“It had to go in a straight line. *Misti* street is always straight”). “Había que ir recto” erupts as a moment of free indirect discourse that is also internally dialogized. The sentence represents the response the *mistis* might make to indigenous protests at their construction efforts. While the response is undoubtedly earnest, the narrator has set the reader up, through the comparison to irrigation ditches and through underscoring the unnaturalness and arbitrariness of the preference for rigidly straight streets, to hear alongside the intended earnestness of the *mistis* his own corrosive irony. The timeless authority communicated by the haber + que + infinitive form (“it is necessary to”) in this sentence is undone by the unmasking of straight streets as an empty convention—and in this case violent, too. As William Rowe observes, the *misti* fixation on straightness emerges as “un principio de comportamiento irracional, introducido desde afuera e impuesto sobre un orden armonioso indígena” (“an irrational principle of behavior, introduced from the outside and imposed on a harmonious indigenous order”; *Mito* 23). In the comparison of *misti* and indigenous streets, indigenous streets come out on top in the reader’s assessment.

The narrative voice constructs straight streets vs. river-like streets as strong cultural markers, typifying the two contrasted cultures. The binary opposition “straight/meandering” summons related binary pairs, including patterned/unpredictable, governed by rule/governed by personal preference, rational/irrational, culture/nature—all of which might be mapped on to the opposition “*misti/comunero*.” The narrator’s discourse, however, undermines the functioning of these pairs. For example, though the novel’s intended reader might initially assume that the preference for straight streets is driven by “rationality,” the narrator challenges this supposition by contextualizing the convention. In a steep ravine in the Andes crisscrossed by irrigation ditches and crop fields instrumental to survival, straight streets are not a rational choice. Likewise, the narrator subtly undoes the binary culture/nature (undoubtedly connected to the more fraught opposition civilization/barbarism, hegemonic throughout so much of Latin American history), whereby the *mistis* are understood to have brought culture and better living conditions to the *comuneros*. Through his exposition of indigenous culture in “Pueblo indio,” the narrator affirms that indigenous culture does take many cues from nature (creating streets that resemble rivers, for example), but that rather than indicating a

lack of culture this represents a form of culture that values nature and seeks to emulate the elegance and efficiency of its designs. The *misti* obsession with straight lines becomes a source of comic relief in an otherwise grim story of colonization, but also, as we have seen here, carries out the very serious job of challenging a series of assumptions about indigenous culture, essentialized in the binary oppositions above, that have historically justified colonial discourses.

A final note on straightness before moving on: the *mistis* name their main street Bolívar after the nineteenth-century mastermind of pan-American liberation—a symbol of nationhood and independence; notably, however, at the point where the street runs into the indigenous neighborhood of Chaupi it becomes known as “Calle Derecha.” In line with the discussion of etymology above, we might read this moniker as an ironic gloss on the legacy of Latin American nationhood: whereas Bolívar’s legacy should be the toppling of colonial hierarchies and their replacement with the rule of justice and equal rights under the law, what it has brought, rather, is the use of the law by the wealthy and well-connected to unjustly dispossess indigenous groups of land they have worked, and improved, for centuries.

The engagement with straightness in “Pueblo indio” illustrates that, on top of his struggle to represent in Spanish a world he experiences in Quechua, Arguedas faces the daunting task of resemanticizing Spanish words connected to the legacy of colonial ideology. The struggle to, in Bakhtin’s words, take words “already populated with the social intentions of others” and make them “serve a second master” is a central preoccupation of this opening chapter (“Discourse in the Novel” 299). One of the principal tasks taken up by Arguedas’s narrator is the creation of a cultural context where words can take on new meanings and connotations. Arguedas lays the foundation for this work through the narrator’s use of non-standard Spanish, which through defamiliarizing language and thus distancing words from their conventional contexts and meanings, aids in the process of making words bend to the narrator’s “semantic and expressive intention” (Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel” 293).

Arguedas emphasizes the tense, ongoing nature of these struggles over signification. If the narrator manages to become the “second master” of “derecho” and “recto,” the fate of another key term from the chapter, “pueblo indio”—the chapter title itself—is left unresolved. The phrase appears multiple times throughout the chapter, each time inflected differently. After its appearance as chapter title, the phrase next appears in a sentence that inflects it positively: “Pueblo indio, sobre la lomada, junto a un riachuelo” (“Indian town, on the mountainside, by a stream”; 7; Barraclough 1). This sentence appears at the end of an early paragraph that describes the *misti* and indigenous segments of town, but in this refrain-like sentence fragment that caps off the paragraph the narrator focuses entirely on the *pueblo indio*’s physical features, seeming to savor each in turn. Soon enough, however, we find the phrase in the mouths of visitors from the coast, being spoken with disdain: “Unos hablan con desprecio; tiritan de frío en la cumbre los costeños y hablan: --¡Pueblo indio!” (“Some speak contemptuously; on the summit the coastal people shiver with cold and say: ‘Indian town!’”; 7; Barraclough 1). Soon thereafter, Arguedas concludes a chapter segment with a simple “--¡Pueblo indio!” unattached to any particular speaker or group (9). Arguedas seems to have left the line of dialogue purposefully unattributed in order to emphasize the contested nature of the phrase. The reader is not sure whether to read it as evoking affection or contempt; the

exclamation points that bookend the phrase could convey either. This ambiguity hints at the question that *Yawar Fiesta*, as a novel, ultimately asks: What is the place and status of the *pueblo indio* in modern Peru?

Through his various deployments of “pueblo indio” Arguedas makes clear to the reader that language is a “complex and dynamic organism,” a “struggle” and a “process,” but not an ultimate or static meaning (Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel” 354). The narrator’s micro-struggles over words foreshadow the greater struggle that structures the novel as a whole: the struggle over the meaning of the *Yawar fiesta*, the bullfight at the center of the novel. What is a venerable tradition, breathlessly anticipated, to the *comuneros* is a display of barbarism and backwardness to the *principales*, and a deplorable exploitation of the *comuneros* to the segment of Puquio that has migrated to Lima to pursue a university education. As in the case of “pueblo indio,” Arguedas leaves active contrasting perspectives on the bullfight. Though the *comuneros* win out at the end and are able to conduct the bullfight according to their traditions, the narrator describes the gory death of Wallpa, one of the amateur bullfighters, as a result of this victory, reanimating in the reader’s mind some of the arguments against the bullfight.

Through leaving open these questions of the fate of language and culture, Arguedas creates a text that is mimetic rather than utopic, reflecting the realities of contemporary Peru in all their complexity. However, his innovative uses of narrative voice, he reaches, too, for literature’s agency. For Arguedas, at this point in his career, this agency depends on a narrative voice that is critical of inherited language and conventions, that challenges hierarchy as it manifests in the novel, and that exposes the hidden force fields of language and representation that the storyteller must negotiate as he speaks.

Chapter Two

The Politics of Description in Arguedas's *Los ríos profundos*

Los ríos profundos (1958), Arguedas's second and most celebrated novel, presents itself as a first-person account of fourteen-year-old Ernesto's experiences in a Catholic boarding school in Abancay, a small city in the Peruvian Andes. Ernesto is an outsider, a highly sensitive young man who spends his free time wandering alone by Abancay's rivers and attempting to make contact with the region's indigenous population. Raised by his father, an itinerant lawyer, Ernesto's linguistic and cultural alliances lie with the Quechua-speaking population his father serves and among whom he has mostly lived. He is ill at ease in Abancay, a town rigidly divided along race and class lines, whose only indigenous population consists of *colonos*, hacienda Indians whose marginalization is so great they do not dare to return Ernesto's greetings when he tries to engage them in conversation.

Arguedas portrays Ernesto's development as a young man as a series of linguistic transgressions: he speaks to whom he should not speak and seeks to communicate in ways that are doomed to fail. In a revealing scene from the first chapter, Ernesto speaks emphatically to an Incan wall. In another central scene, which I will analyze at length below, he writes an impassioned letter to an indigenous love interest—a girl who would be illiterate and unable to read his offering. He seeks out communication with Marcelina, a mute woman who has been taken in by the authorities at his boarding school. Ernesto's gift—and compulsion—is to try to make communication happen where it should not, and where previously it could not.

This salient group of scenes, together with Arguedas's publicly narrated struggles to render in Spanish the Andean highlands, a world he viewed as infused with—even created by—what he described as “dulce y palpitante quechua”, has led critics to create robust accounts of *Los ríos profundos* as a novel that explores cultural identity as shaped in a fundamental way by the politics of language and voice (“La novela” 169). This approach to Arguedas's novel is an essential one. The experiments Arguedas carries out on the level of language—which range from creating Spanish prose imbued with not just the grammatical structures of Quechua, but with Arguedas's tenderness toward its forms and awe before its expressive capacities, to weaving Quechua lyric tradition into the novel-form—are transformative for the Peruvian, and even Latin American, novel.¹³ In this way, *Los ríos profundos* constitutes an important continuation of the work Arguedas carries out in his first novel, *Yawar Fiesta* (1941), which, as I argue in Chapter One, features a radically new kind of narrative voice at the outset of the mid-century moment on which this dissertation focuses.

Issues of language and voice are no doubt crucial to our understanding of *Los ríos profundos*' political commitments; nevertheless, our understanding of the novel's

¹³ For rich discussions of Arguedas's artistic innovations on the level of language, see Alberto Escobar's *Arguedas, o la utopía de la lengua*, especially the second chapter, “Lengua, discurso y escritura,” and William Rowe's “El lenguaje literario de Arguedas” in *Mito e ideología en la obra de José María Arguedas*.

narrative activism remains incomplete if it does not also take up the novel's attention to the sensing body as a politicized site of identity construction, and Arguedas's unprecedented effort to remake the reader's sensory experience of the world. This dimension of *Los ríos profundos* has been overlooked by prior critics and will constitute the focus of this chapter.

Arguedas addresses the political dimension of bodily life through descriptive passages that celebrate sights, smells, sounds, textures, and tastes that would normally be perceived by non-indigenous Peruvian subjects—Arguedas's intended audience—as unappealing and even repellent. These passages undertake a reclamation, in particular, of the marginal and abject, constructing the dirty, the fly-infested, the redolent, the excrement-stained as sites of sensory interest and even beauty. Visual, tactile, and olfactory encounters with dirtiness become, in these passages, meaningful and enriching sensory experiences. Arguedas models the appreciation of “sensory complexity”—what I term this canon of alternate, counterintuitive sensory preferences—subtly and convincingly. Because the narrator's enjoyment of sensory complexity emerges in the context of descriptive passages, textual sites that the novel as a genre constructs as of secondary importance, and which seem to the reader not so much to express a point of view as to carry out the practical task of providing visual or historical information about the story world, the reader quite easily accepts the sensory and aesthetic judgments the passages contain. These self-effacing passages appear to be merely conveying what is there—a quiet street, a puddle—while actually engaged in the heady business of guiding the reader toward a fresh apprehension of the physical world.

Sensory complexity is Arguedas's solution to a longstanding problem facing indigenista novelists: how to treat the fraught issue of dirt in their fictions. Despite their commitment to challenging negative images of indigenous groups, indigenista novelists tend to avoid addressing the stigma of dirtiness and disease borne by mestizos and especially Indians, and its crystallization in the stereotypical image of the “dirty Indian.” Many go so far as to absent detailed descriptions of indigenous bodies from their works, perhaps uncertain of how to proceed without revealing habits of personal care that would be perceived as foreign and repellent by their intended readership, and which might thus subvert these authors' larger mission of awakening in their readers feelings of identity and solidarity with indigenous groups. *Los ríos profundos* sets itself apart from other indigenista novels in that it not only takes up the role dirt plays in the Peruvian cultural imagination—itself an unconventional move—but, in a daring narrative rejoinder to the stereotype of the “dirty Indian,” also aestheticizes dirt. With this strategy, Arguedas engages and develops a minoritarian indigenista current, which, in the context of a textual tradition that has tacitly succumbed to the colonial construction of dirt as a sign of cultural lack, and even barbarism, elaborates a vision of culture and aesthetics that pointedly incorporates dirt and even its extreme manifestation as filth. This is not to say that all of Arguedas's representations of dirt are positive; *Los ríos profundos* features at its center a scathing critique of the hacienda as an oppressively dirty space. In the novel's closing chapters, Arguedas depicts the Indians living on the Patibamba hacienda as particularly vulnerable to the ravages of a typhus epidemic, a disease, as Mario Cueto puts it, “associated with poverty, overcrowding, and filth” (33). A clear message of *Los ríos profundos* is that hacienda living conditions are indefensible. But Arguedas distinguishes from this kind of filth a different kind of dirtiness, which he guides the

reader to begin to perceive with her newly configured sensory apparatus as comforting and comfortable, vibrant, compelling, and even beautiful and romantic.

In *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, anthropologist Mary Douglas distinguishes between a modern concept of dirt, “dominated by the knowledge of pathogenic organisms,” which emerges in response to the nineteenth-century discovery of germs, and an older concept, according to which dirt is “matter out of place” (36). It is this older understanding of dirtiness that coincides with what Arguedas celebrates in *Los ríos profundos*. For Douglas, all cultural systems entail “a systematic ordering and classification of matter,” which necessarily produces a “by-product” of “inappropriate elements” that do not belong (36). These misfitting elements constitute the category of the dirty. Douglas’s definition helps us further unpack the ideology encapsulated in the image of the “dirty Indian”: the discursive production of the Indian as “dirty” in the early decades of the twentieth century results not merely from an observed difference between European and indigenous concepts of cleanliness, but also from a larger sense of indigenous groups as “inappropriate elements” within Peru’s dominant politico-cultural system, the modern nation-state. The literal dirtiness of the Indian body only points to this more abstract notion of indigenous groups as “dirty” in the sense of extra-systemic, threatening the coherence of a modern, state-based social order. Abject objects and places—“abject” meaning literally “rejected,” “cast out,” and “expelled”¹⁴—become natural symbols for these groups.

Sensory complexity plays with this concept of dirtiness by creating a rightful, even privileged, place in the novel for “matter out of place,” that is, for the Peruvian Andes’ socially marginalized groups: mestizos and especially Indians. Sensory complexity provides Arguedas with a narrative perspective from which he can respectfully introduce real Indian bodies, which Ernesto describes approvingly as smelling of “emanaciones humanas,” into his novelistic world. It opens up space for the positive representation of marginal neighborhoods and dwelling spaces—such as Huanupata and its *chicherías* (bars selling corn alcohol, or “chicha”)—as sites of vibrant cultural production, which foster social relations that cross gender, race, and class lines. On a more abstract level, sensory complexity paves the way for the functioning of an alternative symbolic economy in *Los ríos profundos*, where conventional equivalencies established by the ideology of colonialism—such as the association of indigenous groups with filth and excrement—can be interrupted and new associations—an arresting vision of excrement as beautiful—offered. Through sensory complexity, Arguedas launches an unprecedented defense of dirty bodies and disorderly, grime-coated spaces, at the same time that his novel challenges the marginalizing discourse these physical states have historically evoked and justified.

“Entre el kechwa y el castellano”: The Primacy of Language in Arguedas Studies

It is impossible to understand Arguedas’s literary production or appreciate its importance without considering the politics of language the author had to navigate as he defined his path as a writer. These politics are everywhere in his poetry, novels, and shorts stories and—as demonstrated by my own focus on the issue of voice in Chapter

¹⁴ Definitions are from the Oxford English Dictionary, Third Edition (online version)

One—crucial to his contribution to Latin American letters and to what I am describing as his narrative activism. They do not, however, express the limits of that activism, which in *Los ríos profundos* (and elsewhere) extends beyond language to engage other realms of human experience. Before moving forward with my analysis of Arguedas's appeal to the reader as embodied subject in *Los ríos profundos*, I would like to explore in greater depth why the critical tradition has focused on the linguistic register of Arguedas's work at the expense of others such as the bodily.

“Arguedas, almost alone among Latin American writers,” Brian Gollnick points out, “possessed a high level of colloquial proficiency in a native language” (55). The singularity of Arguedas's bilingualism seems to be the obvious answer to the question of critics' consistent focus on language in Arguedas's work. But the reason for the intense development of this line of inquiry (and the consequent underdevelopment of other lines) is more layered, complex, and interesting, and more entwined with the twentieth-century history of Latin American narrative, than this simple biographical explanation suggests. Critics have been primed, I argue, by Arguedas's autobiographical writings, and these writings have been given significant weight by the generic conventions of the regionalist novel.

Arguedas's dramatic autobiographical writings, narrating his conflicted decision to become an artist of the Spanish language when his cultural allegiances, as well as his linguistic passion, lay with Quechua, can be used as a compelling lens through which to view his prose fiction and are frequently published alongside his novels so as to encourage this practice.¹⁵ In his 1939 essay “Entre el kechwa y el castellano la angustia del mestizo,” Arguedas describes the mestizo writer, the native speaker of Quechua compelled to write in Spanish in order to be read, as in “anguish” over his fate as a writer (38). This anguish is born of the conflict between the need for self-expression and the inadequacy of the expressive medium: “el castellano aprendido a viva fuerza, escuela, colegio o universidad, no le sirve bien para decir en forma plena y profunda su alma o el paisaje del mundo donde creció” (37). Arguedas portrays this anguish prominently in his writings; we can read it, for example, in Ernesto's perpetual, and always frustrated, search for interlocutors in *Los ríos profundos*.

This tendency to reference Arguedas's life as an important frame for interpreting his work also has generic roots, as Roberto González Echevarría's *Myth and Archive* suggests. Far from an idiosyncrasy elicited by the unique details of Arguedas's life story, the practice of turning to authors' life experiences to illuminate or authorize their works, González Echevarría argues, is one invited by the regionalist novel as a genre, which González Echevarría characterizes as deeply influenced by anthropology.¹⁶ González

¹⁵ Arguedas's article “La novela y el problema de la expresión literaria en el Perú,” for example, is often published together with *Yawar Fiesta* (see the 1977 Losada edition, for example), including in the novel's English translation by Frances Horning Barraclough (Prospects Heights: Waveland Press, 1985).

¹⁶ Whether or not *Los ríos profundos* should be classified as a regionalist novel is itself a divisive question. In *Los universos narrativos de José María Arguedas*, Antonio Cornejo Polar blames Arguedas's classification as a regionalist and/or indigenista writer for the “displencia” with which his work has been met by the continent's premier literary figures: “Se explica parcialmente esta displencia porque suele incorporarse la obra de Arguedas . . . a la novela regional o a la corriente indigenista, ahora mal afamada. Tal adscripción requiere un profundo replanteo, como lo urge, también, el enjuiciamiento globalmente negativo que viene siendo habitual en lo que toca a las instancias que preceden al período que Vargas Llosa denomina de la ‘novela de creación’, que comenzaría con la obra de Onetti” (11). Vargas Llosa famously

Echevarría describes regionalist novels as accompanied, as they circulated among readers, by “ancillary stories” telling of research trips undertaken by authors in preparation for writing (155). These framing stories, which González Echevarría refers to as “fables of validation or legitimation,” recounted authors’ experiences among Latin America’s interior cultures, visits they modeled on the fieldwork carried out by those newly certified scientists of culture—anthropologists—and which they presented to their readers as proof of their status as reliable sources on these cultures (155).

Different from these authors, Arguedas *was* a trained anthropologist, but his own “fable of legitimation” is not about his journeys to the periphery of the nation-state to study the customs of modernity’s Other (though he took these kinds of journeys, too), but rather the story of his own childhood, when his identity as a Quechua-speaking Indian was formed, and of his struggles in early adulthood to write Spanish-language prose fiction from this decentered subject position. Arguedas’s fable of legitimation is thus a disavowal of his need for a fable of legitimation—on this basis a whole critical tradition has distinguished Arguedas’s oeuvre from that of the regionalist novelists who preceded him. In lieu of the notebooks, filled with “unusual words, strange stories, customs regarding horsemanship and cattle-ranching” with which regionalist novelists Ricardo Güiraldes and Rómulo Gallegos prove their status as experts, Arguedas brandishes his bilingualism (González Echevarría 155). His journey in preparation for writing is a journey within.

As it turns out, the autobiographical details Arguedas, and subsequently his critics, have proffered as frames for his fictional work, like the legitimizing “tales” circulated by other regionalist novelists, are a mixture of fact and fiction, real life experience and poetic exaggeration (González Echevarría 155).¹⁷ Through analysis of pieces written by Arguedas during the 1930s and 40s, John Landreau demonstrates that Arguedas’s identification with indigenous culture is much less stable over the course of his lifetime than he later represents it to have been. “Doña Caytana,” published in 1935, features, Landreau points out, a narrator whose “voz autobiográfica arguediana se distingue claramente de la voz de los quechua-hablantes representados” (213). It is only in the 1950s that Arguedas (born in 1911) “empieza a hacer mucho hincapié en la relación entre su experiencia infantil y el carácter de su obra,” claiming that the intimate tie to Quechua language and culture he represents in his fictions originates in his own infancy (212). Landreau shows how the earliest critical essays on Arguedas’s work, published in the 1960s, reinforce and even exaggerate Arguedas’s claims to having identified with an indigenous “nosotros” from early childhood, with one critic pushing the age of his acquisition of the Spanish language forward to seventeen (213). Echoing González Echevarría’s language, Landreau identifies in this account of Arguedas’s childhood great “poder legitimador,” citing the fabrications as playing “un papel

labeled the works that preceded the “novela de la creación” as “primitive,” leading to the stigma Cornejo Polar references. More recently, in an essay for the *Cambridge Companion to the Latin American Novel*, Brian Gollnick has defined the regionalist novel less polemically as a genre that emerges “at the moment in which the novel came to occupy a central place in Latin American intellectual life” (57). Gollnick’s definition offers another insight into the reason why regionalist authors’ life experiences became relevant to the reception of their work. As the novel became an important player in civic discourse, readers wanted to know more about the people behind literary works.

¹⁷ For a succinct account of these inaccuracies and fabrications as well as references to the scholarly works that establish them as such, see Estelle Tarica’s *The Inner Life of Mestizo Nationalism*, pp. 83-84.

fundamental en su ascendente prominencia literaria” (213). Arguedas’s narrative of a solidly Indian-identified childhood appears to be as appealing a fiction to his early celebrants as it became to Arguedas himself. His bilingualism becomes an important piece of evidence in establishing the veracity of this story.

My intention in citing Landreau and situating within regionalist convention the role Arguedas’s life story has played in the reception of his work is neither to unmask Arguedas as less Indian than he claims to be,¹⁸ nor to question the singularity of his literary production as a bilingual Quechua-Spanish subject, but rather to explore the reasons why his oeuvre, and *Los ríos profundos*, in particular, have been read so insistently along the vectors of language and voice. Taking into consideration all we have seen here, it becomes clear that a number of interrelated factors have influenced the course of Arguedas criticism: Arguedas points us toward his bilingualism by way of autobiographical texts that, as part of a reading practice with an established history in Latin America, have accompanied his novels as they have circulated among his readers, and framed our apprehension of his works. The author’s earliest critics further emphasize this element of his biography in order to characterize Arguedas as a novelist with an unprecedentedly intimate relationship with indigenous Peru, fulfilling their own desire to see such a figure emerge on the literary scene. In the case of *Los ríos profundos*, Arguedas’s autobiographical novel, the structure of the text’s drama emphasizes these issues; climactic scenes often hinge on acts of speaking or writing. In order to grasp the breadth of Arguedas’s political project as a novelist, however, studies of language must be contextualized within the larger construct of identity, which for Arguedas goes beyond language to saturate every facet of personal and national life and, in a parallel way, every element of his novelistic practice. Essential to this more comprehensive account of identity in Arguedas’s work, I argue, is an investigation of the role played by the sensory body as a crucial site of identity formation and expression.

The Political Stakes of Describing a Mulberry Tree

True to their interest in issues of voice and language in Arguedas’s works, critics writing about *Los ríos profundos* have flocked to what Estelle Tarica has aptly named the “scene of the two letters” (*Inner Life* 128). In the scene, Ernesto has one of his first positive interactions with Antero, a classmate, when Antero asks Ernesto, whom he has heard writes “como poeta,” to compose a letter on his behalf to his love interest, Salvinia, “la reina de Abancay” (246). Ernesto begins with confidence but then stalls in

¹⁸ Arguedas’s shifting racial identity must be interpreted within the context of Peruvian culture, where racial identity is a dynamic construct, defined not by descent but by a variety of mutable factors including language, level of literacy, geographic location (a white person who relocates from a small town to a city might, in his new home, be considered an Indian), and class (Cueto 28). The question is not, thus, whether or not Arguedas can legitimately identify as an Indian—according to this definition of race, he can on a number of counts—but rather at what point in his life this aspect of his identity became his primary one. For a fascinating account of one individual’s attempt to understand his own shifting racial identity, see Marcos Cueto’s account of the life of Manuel Nuñez Butrón, a physician who lived and worked in Puno in the early decades of the twentieth century, in “*Indigenismo and Rural Medicine in Peru: The Indian Sanitary Brigade and Manuel Nuñez Butrón*,” pp. 28-30.

indecision, uncertain what language to write in and which literary tradition to draw on, Spanish or Quechua.

It is easy to see why this has become one of the novel's most celebrated scenes. It represents a moment of critical decision-making for Ernesto, who, on the threshold of adulthood and far from his father, interprets the task as asking him to locate himself on Abancay's social map. Read autobiographically, the scene recreates Arguedas's own conflicts as a bilingual writer; read metatextually, it constitutes a self-reflexive turn in which the novel contemplates the process of its own creative elaboration. What the rich interpretive literature on this scene has overlooked, however, is its bodily register. Arguedas embeds in the scene an introduction to Ernesto's decentered sensorium, and also a meditation on the schism between Ernesto's experience of the world as an embodied subject and the representational systems at his disposal to transform those experiences into prose.

Ernesto's first attempt at composing the love letter draws heavily on the romantic idiom of the Western poetic tradition. The opening lines give a good sense of the voice Ernesto adopts: "Usted es la dueña de mi alma, adorada niña. Está usted en el sol, en la brisa, en el arco iris que brilla bajo los puentes, en los sueños" (249). The letter is an awkward patchwork of "literary" commonplaces, a stilted blend of the language of romanticism and *modernismo*, as many critics have noted.¹⁹ Ernesto himself is immediately dissatisfied with his creation. Overcome by "una especie de aguda vergüenza," he hides his face in his arms as if to shut out the external world and listen to a voice within (250). A question takes shape in his consciousness: How would he approach the task differently if he were to direct the missive to a young indigenous girl? He decides to write a second letter, this one in Quechua, in spite of his realization that his chosen medium—the written word—would be useless to woo his hypothetical addressee, who would be illiterate.

When Arguedas incorporates a Quechua text into *Los ríos profundos*, he normally provides the original in full, followed by a Spanish translation. This enables his intended reader, who would not be familiar with the Quechua language or highlands Peruvian culture, to interact meaningfully with the Quechua sections of the novel.²⁰ With Ernesto's "Quechua" letter, however, Arguedas provides only the first phrase of the letter in Quechua, followed by a translation of the full letter in Spanish, a textual twist I will deal with at greater length below. Here is the letter:

<<Uyriy chay k'atik'niki siwar k'entita...>>

<<Escucha al picaflor esmeralda que te sigue; te ha de hablar de mí; no seas cruel, escúchale. Lleva fatigadas las pequeñas alas, no podrá volar más; detente ya. Está cerca la piedra blanca donde descansan los viajeros, espera allí y escúchale; oye su llanto; es sólo el mensajero de mi joven corazón, te ha de hablar de mí. Oye, hermosa, tus ojos como estrellas

¹⁹ See, for example, Lambright's *Creating the Hybrid Intellectual* (139) or Peter Elmore's "Las lecciones de la memoria" (345).

²⁰ Cornejo Polar describes the reader for whom indigenista authors write as a "lector urbano, especialmente al de las capas medias," "occidentalizado" in his social and cultural identities and in close contact with the cultural formations of Peru's coast rather than its interior (*La novela indigenista* 64-65).

grandes, bella flor, no huyas más, detente! Una orden de los cielos te traigo: ¡te mandan ser mi tierna amante...!>> (250-251)

Whereas the majority of the Spanish letter takes as its subject the beauty of its addressee, here we find only a few short phrases dedicated to this purpose (“Oye, hermosa, tus ojos como estrellas grandes, bella flor”), with the preponderance of the letter focusing on the admirer. The letter depicts his desperate attempt to be heard by the insouciant girl, whom he implores to cease her movement so that a hummingbird, his intermediary, can deliver his message of teary desperation: “oye su llanto; es sólo el mensajero de mi joven corazón.” Whereas the Spanish letter features the cold prettiness of stylized imagery, the Quechua letter strikes tones of heated melodrama. Its romance inheres not in the evocation of the loved one’s perfection, but rather in the intensity of the admirer’s feelings. The Quechua letter thus presents a radically different model of courtship from the Spanish letter, which, as Margot Beyersdorff has shown, originates in Quechua culture itself. Beyersdorff cites the letter’s tone of “supplication,” its “repeated use of the imperative,” its meter, and its “use of a mediator” to convey the message of love as key indications that Ernesto’s letter might in fact be a real *huayno*, translated by Arguedas into Spanish and converted to prose for inclusion in his novel (43).

Upon completing his composition, Ernesto bursts into tears, an expression, he tells us, neither of “pena,” nor of “desesperación,” but of “seguro orgullo” (251). He leaves the classroom in a state of elation, “como cuando cruzaba a nado los ríos de enero cargados del agua más pesada y turbulenta” (251). The implication is that in choosing to use his talents to write a letter fitting an indigenous young girl, rather than Salvinia, Ernesto has struggled against something difficult, and won. Antonio Cornejo Polar puts it this way: “[Ernesto] ha reafirmado su pertenencia al mundo indio. Casi podría decirse que ha vencido la tentación de ser *blanco*” (*Universos narrativos* 132).

Critics have celebrated the Quechua letter as not just marking an important moment of arrival for Ernesto, as a character, but as a moment of fulfillment for the Peruvian, and even the Latin American novel, representing a powerful intermixing of indigenous Peruvian language and poetics with the Western novel-form. The Quechua letter’s pedigree as traced by Beyersdorff incites critic Anne Lambright to characterize it as modeling a new mode of literary expression, which she describes as a “mestizo literary discourse,” more capable of representing “the indigenous element of Peruvian culture” (140). Lambright regards the letter as a kind of stylistic *mise en abyme*, displaying in a single paragraph Arguedas’s cultural-linguistic aspirations for the novel as a whole. Along similar lines, Amy Nauss Millay sees the scene as “illustrat[ing] the thesis that Arguedas frequently formulated in his expository writings: writing infused with Quechua orality surpassed Western poetics as a means of evoking the nuances of Peruvian reality” (105). In this way, the Quechua letter has anchored interpretations of the novel as a transculturated text, blending *criollo* and indigenous cultural forms in a fashion that is enlivening of both, as well as serving as a site of cultural preservation for elements of regional culture—in this case the *huayno*—as Angel Rama proposes the twentieth-century Latin American novel has and should.²¹

²¹ Rama describes the transculturated novel as achieving “la continuidad histórica de formas culturales profundamente elaboradas por la masa social, ajustándola con la menor pérdida de identidad, a las nuevas condiciones fijadas por el marco internacional de la hora” (88).

These critics, however, have elaborated their analyses of the scene of the two letters without consideration of the narrative prelude that leads up to Ernesto's act of composition. When placed in the context of the entire scene in which they appear, the cultural politics expressed by the two letters grow more complex. The prelude guides us to read the letters not only with respect to Ernesto's relationship to language and literary tradition, but also to his sensory experience of the world. When considered from this perspective, the Quechua letter, much like the Spanish one, can be interpreted as a moment of silencing or censorship of Ernesto's true self. In order to arrive at this more complete appraisal of the scene, we must travel back to its very beginning: the moment when Ernesto sits down in an empty classroom to think over Antero's request for a love letter. He asks himself, "¿Cómo empezaría la carta?", and this question sets off two full pages of reflection—the narrative prelude prior critics have regarded as expendable but which will constitute the center of my own analysis.

The first thing Ernesto does is summon to mind an image of the Avenida Condebamba, the street where Salvina, the object of Antero's affection, lives. He does not remember having ever seen Salvina, so his meditation on the avenue stands in for picturing her to himself. He describes the avenue in detail, and from here his thoughts drift. He contemplates his own distance from Abancay's "señoritas," like Salvina. "No eran de mi mundo," he tells the reader. "Centelleaban en otro cielo" (248). This thought—perhaps the verticality of the metaphor, with the *señoritas* sparkling in a distant sky—prompts the memory of a night Ernesto spent in the Andean valley of Apurímac, and of a beautiful young girl he glimpsed there, peering out from a hacienda balcony. He recalls spending the night with his father in the stables of the hacienda, sleeping poorly, his face throbbing with bug bites, his mind haunted by the image of the beautiful young girl, whose inaccessibility he measures by comparing his meager bed of "polvo de alfalfa y excremento" in the stables with the world of luxuries in which he imagines her ensconced up in the hacienda house (249). Ernesto's last thought before beginning to write is that through his command of language, through writing, he can bridge the distance between his world and hers.

This extended reverie begins with a descriptive passage—I will refer to it as the "mulberry tree passage"—which constitutes a critical touchstone for interpreting the rest of the scene. The passage touches on topics crucial to the larger stakes of *Los ríos profundos*, such as colonialism, counterhegemony, and aesthetics, but does so without fanfare, with language that seems to discourage further analysis. It describes an avenue with a highly unusual appearance, but the narrator's engaged yet factual tone, befitting the presentation of interesting but tangential information, encourages the reader to regard the passage as a curiosity largely insignificant to the greater development of the novel:

¿Cómo empezaría la carta? Yo no recordaba a esa pequeña reina de Abancay. La Avenida Condebamba era ancha, sin aceras. La llamaban avenida por los árboles de mora que crecían a sus orillas. Decían que fue el camino de entrada de una gran quinta. Cuando llegué a Abancay, unía el pueblo con el campo de fútbol. No recordaba haber visto a una niña de cerquillo junto a ninguna puerta de las pocas casas que había tras las moras, ni asomada a las ventanas. Los árboles crecían junto a los muros de piedra. Las hojas grandes, nervudas, daban una sombra tupida sobre el

camino. En los pueblos andinos no hay moreras. A Abancay las trajo un sericicultor que fracasó porque los hacendados consiguieron hacer dictar un impuesto contra él. Pero las moreras se multiplicaron en las huertas de la ciudad; crecieron con una lozanía sin igual; se convirtieron en grandes y coposos árboles, mansos y nobles. Los pájaros y los niños disfrutaban de sus frutos. Los muros de piedra conservaban las manchas rosadas del fruto. Durante el tiempo de la cosecha, los pájaros fruteros se reunían en las huertas del pueblo para hartarse de moras; el excremento de todos ellos era rojo y caía sobre la cal de las paredes, sobre la calamina de los techos, a veces sobre el sombrero de paja de los transeúntes.

¿En qué casa, a qué distancia del término de la avenida viviría la reina del <<Markask'a>>? Era un camino hermoso para esperar a la niña amada. (247-8)

The passage begins with a description of a street lined with towering mulberry trees, a street that has preserved some of the grandeur it once enjoyed as the entry to a large plantation. The narrator reveals, however, that these large, old trees, whose “nobleza” initially appears to tell the story of the power once wielded by the estate’s owner, actually illustrate a successful challenge to that power. The trees are trespassers, belonging to a non-native species imported to the Andes by a silk cultivator who was himself treated as an interloper and run out of the town by local hacienda owners threatened by his designs on the land. The passage takes an unexpected turn halfway through, when the narrator describes the red stains covering the avenue and its stone walls, a palimpsest of berry juice and red bird excrement from the most recent harvest season, layered over juice and excrement from years past. Far from elegant, the street is in a state of sticky disarray. A still more unexpected turn comes at the end, when the narrator describes the excrement-stained avenue as an ideal setting for courtship. It is beautiful, according to him—“hermoso.”

There is much in this passage that asks for an allegorical reading, but when we try to tease out such an interpretation, nothing quite fits. The mulberry trees are recent arrivals from foreign shores, which crowd out Abancay’s native species by reproducing widely. But far from representing the Spanish colonizers, they are the rebellious heroes of this microhistory. They evade the efforts of the hacienda owners—the unambiguous villains of *Los ríos profundos*—to expel them from the town, and the narrator celebrates their defiance in the passage. Likewise, the red stains with which the birds coat the town’s surfaces, and mark the town’s residents, ask, in the context of the novelistic tradition within which Arguedas is writing, to be read as a materialization of the violence perpetrated against the hacienda Indians. They are the blood of hundreds of years of exploitation, written by the birds onto the straw hats of passing pedestrians. But in the context of this scene, the red stains also represent love, fertility, and the vitality of youth. The passage both encourages us to interpret it according to the conventional Peruvian dialectic of foreigner and native, colonizer and colonized, oppressor and victim, and compels us to move beyond these dialectics to a broader representational horizon, where alternate symbolisms are possible. The narrator’s closing words—“Era un camino hermoso para esperar a la niña amada”—seal this idea of a representational and interpretative “movement beyond.” Arguedas mobilizes here many conventions of

Peruvian novelistic representation, but scrambles them to produce a new kind of writing, and, as a result, a new kind of reading.

Particularly significant is Arguedas's treatment of excrement. Thematically, excrement plays an important role in completing the lifecycle motif that runs through the passage, present in the thriving, spreading mulberry trees, the coming and going of harvest seasons, and Ernesto's imagination of the street as a pretty setting for courtship, prefiguring the creation of new life. Excrement stands in for what we might call the shadow side of life. We eat, and we excrete. We grow and thrive as living beings; we age and ultimately die, ourselves becoming waste. In the Peruvian Andes, however, this natural byproduct of bodily life is charged with socio-political meaning. Excrement, along with other kinds of filth, belongs in Peru to the Indian strata of society because, as Amy Fass Emery writes, "the Imaginary of the controlling elite has constructed an image of the oppressed Indian population as filthy, reeking, and diseased" (61). And as with the other elements of the mulberry tree passage redolent with colonial symbolism—the non-native trees, the red stains—Arguedas gently disconnects excrement here from its colonial circuit of meaning and places it, improbably, in the realm of the aesthetic. The red excrement stains become adornments that contribute to the avenue's romance.

If Arguedas, with the mention of excrement, momentarily summons the colonial sensorium, to which dirtiness is anathema, he forecloses on its ascendancy by providing the reader with a model for a different sensing body, one belonging to a character for whom the reader has come to feel sympathy as well as respect—Ernesto. We can read the mulberry tree passage as an initiatory moment of an appeal to an embodied reader, which runs throughout the text, in which Arguedas constructs her sensing body anew, after the example of Ernesto's. In seeking out a new form for the Latin American novel, reflective of an indigenous experience of the world, it is not enough for Arguedas to acquaint readers with a new kind of voice, one resonant with Quechua cadences and oral tradition, he must give us a new body with a new set of sensory preferences.

Here and throughout the text, as part of this undertaking, the narrator frequently codes excrement and other forms of the unclean—dirt, human body odor, soured puddles of stagnant water, hordes of flies—as positive. For example, the positive associations with excrement that the narrator generates in the mulberry tree passage are picked up on and enriched in the scene immediately following, where Ernesto spends the night in the Apurímac barn, on a bed of "polvo de alfalfa y excremento." The beautiful young girl he spies on a balcony becomes, through the narrator's subtle rhetoric, as sterile and devoid of content as the pane of glass beside which she stands. Conversely, the narrative voice guides us to regard Ernesto's throbbing, bug-bitten face and bed of manure as belonging to a realm of rich sensory experience and, consequently, as saturated with content and meaning. Through a slow accretion of passages in which the narrating self positively represents, and his younger self, Ernesto, positively experiences, conventionally spurned sights, smells, sounds, and even tastes, Arguedas encourages the reader, too, to shift her own sensory preferences and embrace sensory complexity.

Of course, not all representations of dirtiness in the novel belong to this celebrated category. When Ernesto visits Patibamba, the large hacienda bordering Abancay, he makes note of the oppressive filth in which the hacienda Indians live, their bodies coated with "sudor negro" (200). Likewise, he excludes from this category the latrines at Ernesto's boarding school, where older classmates take sexual advantage of Marcelina,

the mute woman with mental retardation ostensibly sheltered by the school. There exists a realm of dirtiness larger than sensory complexity in the novel, but sorting out positive representations of dirt and filth from negative ones does not constitute an interpretative problem for the attentive reader. In spaces of freedom—the Apurímac barn, the *chichería*—Arguedas represents dirtiness as enriching and liberatory, but in exploitative contexts it still signals human suffering.

Arguedas is not the first modernist writer, nor the first Peruvian one, to look to the abject—and even to excrement specifically—as a generative site at which to construct a new aesthetic, which is in fact an anti-aesthetic. Joyce’s work comes to mind as an important influence, and particularly Bloom’s literary criticism on the toilet, but we need not travel across the Atlantic to find literary precursors to Arguedas’s work. The groundbreaking modernist work *Trilce*, published by Peruvian César Vallejo in 1922, opens with a poem about excrement—in fact, about bird excrement, *guano*, in particular. A closer look at the history of guano reveals the extent to which an exploration of the anti-aesthetic in Peruvian letters—however inspired by European modernism—necessarily activates a local set of associations, which fundamentally transforms the category’s meaning.

The English word guano comes to us through Spanish from the original Quechua term, *huanu*.²² Guano was used in Peru from precolonial times as a fertilizer to enrich the soil, and was highly valued by the Incans as a result. In the nineteenth century, as Eduardo Cadava points out, guano became Peru’s principal national export: “In 1841, Peru’s president, Manuel Menéndez, formally nationalized the country’s guano resources and, for the next thirty-five years, the Peruvian government would earn most of its foreign revenues from selling guano to other countries” (117). Guano became a source of wealth in Peru, but also a symbol of human exploitation as poor Peruvians as well as imported Chinese laborers were forcibly recruited to harvest guano under intolerable conditions. Up to 30 percent of the Chinese contract laborers, or “coolies,” shipped to Peru perished during the ocean passage due to conditions resembling those of the Middle Passage, including such hardships as “overcrowding, insufficient food, lack of proper ventilation, and poor hygienic conditions” (Cadava 120). Those who made it to Peru faced insufficient rations and oppressive heat, as well as physical abuse from those who managed the guano fields (121). These conditions drove workers to participate in “frequent” mass suicides, “sometimes involving up to fifty coolies at a time” (121). In light of this history we can see how, much like the mulberry trees lining the Avenida Condebamba, the modernist preoccupation with waste necessarily takes on a life of its own once in the Peruvian milieu.

In *Los ríos profundos*, Arguedas exhumes guano’s older associations as an indigenous Peruvian fertilizer, a substance that nourishes the land’s soil and facilitates vibrant growth. In addition to featuring guano in the mulberry tree passage, which explicitly treats the themes of fertility and reproduction, Arguedas gives the name “*Huanupata*” (mound of guano) to what Ernesto describes as the only “barrio alegre” in Abancay, a place where local culture is created as musicians and townspeople gather in *chicherías* to sing and dance (207). Ernesto translates Huanupata for the reader as “morro del basural,” obscuring the neighborhood’s relationship to guano and connecting it to another kind of waste: trash. Within the schema of sensory complexity, we might

²² Estelle Tarica’s dissertation first brought this etymology to my attention.

interpret this mistranslation as an inside joke whereby Arguedas squeezes two kinds of abjectness out of a single word. Of course, this two-for-one deal would be lost on Arguedas's intended (monolingual) readers. In this way, it represents an extreme example of what we see throughout the novel: a quiet form of narrative activism, often operating below the level of the reader's awareness. As we have seen in the mulberry passage, Arguedas plants the rhetoric of sensory complexity in low-intensity descriptive passages, which seem to deflect readerly attention.

If asked to describe the components of a novel, even the most occasional novel-reader would most likely begin by talking about characters and events. She would certainly not begin, and might not even end, by talking about the moments of narrative description that most every novel contains. Most novels depend on these moments in order to carry out their projects—descriptive passages may even play a critical role in the unfolding of a novel's plot—but they cannot capture our attention as a memorable character or dramatic scene might. Arguedas exploits this hierarchy of narrative elements, proper to the novelistic genre itself, in order to introduce provocative perspectives in such a way that readers are more likely to be receptive to them. Narratologist Susan Sniader Lanser terms this subtle form of narrative rhetoric “embedded ideology” and contrasts it with “explicit ideology” (216). Embedded ideology, “carried at ‘deep-structural’ levels of discourse” and frequently encoded in figurative language, enjoys the “chance of being apprehended on a subliminal level, and accepted without argument” (216, 217). On the other hand, its almost hidden presence, and its often “indeterminate” nature (its encoding as symbol or figure) renders it vulnerable to being either “overlooked” or “misinterpreted” (217-218). Of course, this vulnerability to failure is one shared by all forms of narrative activism. If embedded ideology can pass a reader by unawares, explicit ideology can lead to a reader's immediate alienation from the viewpoint expressed, with no chance for the text to open for the reader new vistas onto the world.²³

Cleaning Up Cuzco, Cleaning Up the Novel: Peru's Sanitary Campaigns and the Limits of Artistic Representation

The image of the “dity Indian” with which Arguedas enters into dialogue in *Los ríos profundos* enjoyed a resurgence in the early twentieth century due to what Marisol de la Cadena terms the “scientific politics” hegemonic in Cuzco in the wake of reforms to the city's institutions of higher learning (61). Instituted in 1909, these reforms expanded and enriched the university's previously faltering Faculty of Natural Sciences, which began to offer coursework in “ethnology, anthropology, human anatomy, physiology and paleontology, along with chemistry, physics, mineralogy and zoology” (61), ultimately creating, according to de la Cadena “a peculiar generation of city rulers,” many educated in the sciences, who “ventured beyond the walls of their studies and laboratories to apply the premises of their sciences in modernizing the city” (68). As part of its practice of

²³ Of course, all novels contain both implicit and explicit ideology. Arguedas approaches the issue of dirt through both methods. In addition to addressing it implicitly, through sensory complexity, Arguedas treats it explicitly in a scene toward the end of the novel when Ernesto encounters an Indian who smells of sweat and unwashed clothes. I will take up this scene in my conclusion.

“scientific politics,” this generation of politicians undertook renovations of Cuzco’s infrastructure. In 1917, as part of a government “sanitary campaign,” for example, “a new marketplace and slaughterhouse were rebuilt, and a new sewage system was inaugurated” (68). Luis A. Arguedas,²⁴ a physician and health inspector who played a prominent role in shaping Cuzco’s sanitary campaigns, additionally identified Indian dwellings as “*focos de infección*, hubs from where germs spread out to infect the population” and ordered their removal (70).

The sanitary campaign did not limit its intervention to changing the body of the city; it extended its modernizing efforts to the bodies of its inhabitants, specifically mestizos and Indians, who were considered unclean and potential carriers of disease (68). Arguedas recommended that “the long braids of market women should be cut, and mestizas should be obliged to have short hair” (71), and that the mestiza vendors cover their traditional dress, a “*vestido de castilla* . . . made of hand-woven wool” with “white, body-length aprons” to protect their wares from contamination by bugs or bacteria potentially present on their bodies (70). *Chicherías* were another prime target, not just due to the material conditions in which they operated, but also to their perceived status as sites of moral depravity: “They were required to have a nearby source of running water and, to safeguard morality, *chicherías* located in decent neighborhoods had to operate in inside patios. This would spare honest neighbors from witnessing scandalous scenes” (71). Racist attitudes that associated Cuzco’s marginal population—Indians and mestizos alike²⁵—with immoral behavior thus cloaked themselves in the new, “objective” discourse of modern science and medicine. As de la Cadena shows, sanitation control and moral policing constituted the verso and recto of this early twentieth-century drive to modernize Cuzco, and were joined together under the concept of “decency.”

De la Cadena defines decency as “a sexualized moral class discourse that defined the racial identities of the region. By stressing moral/sexual purity it distinguished *gente decente* from *gente del pueblo* (Indians and mestizos), notwithstanding their phenotypic similarities” (47). The push for a “sanitary” Cuzco, featuring what de la Cadena describes as both “material and moral purity,” thus had an identitarian pay-off for cuzqueño indigenistas: by isolating, through public policy, a backward and immoral population within Cuzco, they consolidated their own status as modern, decent subjects. This ideological operation, coupled with their work to transform Cuzco’s image on both national and international stages to that of a modern urban center, served Cuzco politicians’ shared ambition to “to launch Cuzco as a nationally relevant political center and themselves as legitimate politicians like their limeño counterparts” (67). In short, the sanitary campaigns were born as much of politicians’ desire to remake Cuzco’s—and subsequently their own—reputation as of their concern for the wellbeing of the city’s residents.

This early twentieth-century discourse on the Indian and mestizo body salient across urban and rural regions of the Peruvian highlands,²⁶ imprints itself on literary

²⁴ I have found no evidence of the health inspector’s relation to José María Arguedas.

²⁵ For Cuzco’s indigenistas, these two groups were often one and the same, with the difference between the two hinging on geography: “indigenistas defined mestizos as former Indians who had decayed morally after leaving the haven of their agricultural community” (de la Cadena 65).

²⁶ Sanitary campaigns targetting similar habits of personal care (haircuts, bathing) to those addressed in Cuzco were carried out in rural communities in Puno, as Marcos Cueto describes in “Indigenismo and Rural Medicine in Peru: The Indian Sanitary Brigade and Manuel Nuñez Butrón,” pp. 34-35. Cueto tells

production of the period by establishing the limits of the writeable. Major indigenista works take one of two courses in representing the indigenous body. Most common among the indigenista writers who write about *ayllu* Indians, or Indians who continue to live in independent communities, is to avoid treating the fraught issues of cleanliness or sanitation altogether. The indigenous body is represented abstractly and idealistically, often in passing, or not treated at all. Where we do find filth is in the representation of hacienda Indians, or *colonos*, and the oppressive circumstances in which they live. If indigenismo, as Estelle Tarica puts it, “set itself the task of humanizing Indians and rendering them familiars,” we can understand these authors’ shared desire to skirt the issue of indigenous concepts of cleanliness, for fear they might bring into relief the *unfamiliarity*—or worse, the ‘uncivilized’ nature—of the indigenous groups with whom their novels attempt to guide readers to identify (*Inner Life* xiii).

Despite leading with excrement in his 1922 work of *vanguardista* poetry, *Trilce*, César Vallejo suppresses all mention of filth in his 1931 novel, *El Tungsteno*. As a poet, Vallejo shatters convention; *Trilce* takes for granted not even the basic morphology of the Spanish language, which Vallejo tears apart and reconstructs in unrecognizable ways. His work as a novelist, in contrast, is heavily codified, reproducing the idealizing yet infantilizing image of Peruvian Indians inherited from earlier indigenista texts.²⁷ In *El Tungsteno*, his narrator praises the primitive socialism in which the *soras* live—innocent of the meaning of profit and private property—while lamenting how this innocence renders them vulnerable to the malice of the foreign capitalists who settle in their community, hoping to profit from its mineral wealth. The narrator dwells on the state of the *soras*’ minds, which he describes as “burdas y salvajes” (52), but leaves their bodies alone except to emphasize their physical strength and endurance, the result of a drive to work curiously paired, the narrator notes, with monetary disinterest: “El sora . . . quería agitarse y obrar y entretenerse, y nada más. Porque no podían los soras estarse quietos. Iban, venían, alegres, acezando, tensas las venas y erecto el músculo en acción . . . en un trabajo incesante y, diríase, desinteresado” (51). Vallejo’s Indian is physically vigorous and ethically unimpeachable.

The image of the “dirty Indian” functions as what Bakhtin would call a “hidden polemic” (“Discourse Typology” 187) in Ciro Alegría’s *El mundo es ancho y ajeno*, a central novel in the Peruvian indigenista corpus, published ten years after *El Tungsteno*. The image shapes Alegría’s discourse on the Indian in various ways without appearing itself in the novel. Alegría rebuts the image of the “dirty Indian” through his protagonist, Rosendo Maqui, recharacterizing dirtiness as closeness to nature. Maqui is “un poco vegetal, un poco hombre, un poco piedra”; he is “un hombre con rasgos de montaña” (15). Conversely, the narrator presents Bismarck, Maqui’s lawyer, as physically repugnant due to his overindulgence in alcohol: “Sus ojuelos estaban nublados por el alcohol y todo él olía a aguardiente como si de pies a cabeza estuviera sudando borrachera” (75). When Bismarck invites Maqui and his companions to join him in a

the story of how Butrón recruited indigenous volunteers to aid in the transformation of specific hygiene practices, specifically those that helped stem the transmission of smallpox and typhus.

²⁷ In this respect, Vallejo’s artistic output represents the frequently noted peculiar breach between novelistic and poetic production in Latin America in the early decades of the twentieth century. Whereas European and North American modernist literary currents heavily influence Latin American poets, prose fiction, with a few notable exceptions (Borges primary among them), remains untouched by their influence until a later date.

beer, the Indians decline the offer, and Augusto, one of Maqui's companions, comments that the beverage "Parece orines de caballo" (75). Through this aside, Alegría links the ostensibly educated, civilized lawyer to base bodily functions, turning the tables on colonial ideology that would depict indigenous groups as in need of the guidance of educated, modern individuals such as Bismarck to leave behind their "natural" state and become "civilized" themselves. In this way, he responds to the type of the "dirty Indian" with a counter-type, the "dirty lawyer" or "tinterillo" (73). It is clear that Bismarck is to stand in not just for a class of charlatan lawyers, but for townspeople of dubious moral fiber who, like Bismarck, are drunks, swindlers, and womanizers (Bismarck has abandoned his wife and children in order to live with his mistress). When Maqui finds Bismarck drunk, the lawyer is surrounded by powerful men, "caballeros" and also "las autoridades," who have, like Bismarck, abandoned the "regañó de sus esposas" to drink with Maqui, Maqui's mistress, and other "damiselas" (73). Through his representation of a corrupted class of city-dwellers, Alegría emphasizes the physical wholesomeness and morality purity of the novel's indigenous characters.

Though also an indigenista novel, *Huasipungo* (1934) constitutes a different kind of literary project: the visceral rendering of the filth and disease in which hacienda Indians live. Ecuadorian author Jorge Icaza's widely disseminated novel is named after an institution proper to his nation's hacienda system: hacienda Indians, in exchange for their labor, receive small plots of land known as *huasipungos* to farm for their own sustenance. The novel's narrator provides vivid descriptions of the abject conditions in which the *huasipungueros* live, employing long strings of adjectives in order to drive home his point: the interior spaces of protagonist Andrés Chiliquinga's hut, for example, are "miserables, sucias, prietas, sórdidas" (126) and the men who occupy such homes are "sucios, humildes, desamparados" (131). Icaza renders the image of the "dirty Indian" in vivid detail, but places it within a historical context, showing that the filth and disease that has come to be associated with Ecuador's indigenous groups is a result of the exploitation that stems from colonization, not a symptom of indigenous savagery to be ameliorated by "civilizing" efforts such as that represented by the hacienda.

Icaza, like Arguedas, is interested in sensory education: the process by which specific cultural environments inculcate certain preferences, tolerances, and distastes in the embodied subjects they produce. The Indian characters in *Huasipungo* are attracted to dirt; in one scene, for example, the novel's indigenous protagonist, Andrés Chiliquinga, eagerly anticipates lying in bed and inhaling his mattress's scent (42). As readers we know that it smells of the dirty, unwashed bodies that sleep on it, and in general of the filth of his squalid *huasipungo*. Yet he is attached to this smell in the same way he is attached to his wretched *huasipungo*, which he defends with his life in the novel's closing scene. In a compelling twist, Icaza represents the hacienda owner and his family as also drawn to the smell of unwashed bodies and clothes. One evening, standing in the hallway of his home, the hacienda owner, Pereira, finds his sexual appetite provoked when he catches a whiff of the Indian wetnurse sleeping in a nearby room: "Un leve roncar y un olorcillo a ropa sucia le inyectaron vehemencias juveniles" (58). Icaza traces this attraction to Pereira's earliest sexual experiences, which came in the form of raping Indian servants. Because the bodies of hacienda servants are highly sexualized for Pereira and others of his class, the smell of dirty clothes and unwashed bodies elicits not

the distaste a European or North American might experience, or that Pereira himself might feign as a mode of social distinction, but sexual arousal.

In his novel Icaza constructs two different sensory bodies: that belonging to the narrator and that belonging to the novel's main characters. Unlike in *Los ríos profundos*, the alternately constituted sensory body here is not the product of the indigenous Andean cultural milieu, but of an exploitative system of production. Though the hacienda owners attempt to hold themselves apart from—that is, above—the Indians among whom they live, their bodily appetites betray their membership in the same system,²⁸ whose pathology Icaza suggests through the proliferation of squalor and rot on the page. Icaza constructs the narrator as the only figure in his novel with uncorrupted sensory judgments and responses. As such, the reader is to model her own response to the *huasipungo* on his repulsion.

Indigenista responses to the “dirty Indian” stereotype mostly fit into the two categories of texts represented here: those that suppress the image and those that acknowledge it but only as a social ill produced by the hacienda system. There exists a minor strain of indigenista thought and writing, however, which makes a significant break from the mainstream by proposing that concepts of the clean and the dirty; of pleasant smells and repellent odors; of unsanitary hovels and relaxed, unpretentious gathering spaces are themselves culturally produced, and assigned particular meanings by discourses of contamination that are inconsistent across cultures. A critical text in this lineage is José Uriel García's *El nuevo indio*. Published in Cuzco in 1930, *El nuevo indio* participates in an explosion of essayistic works across Latin America that attempt to articulate a modern regional identity, meditating in particular on how to frame the relationship between modern republics and the continent's precolombian and colonial past.²⁹ Uriel García argues that the future of Peru, and all of Latin America, turns on the figure of the “new Indian.” The new Indian's identity is not determined by race or blood, but by his creative “spirit,” which finds its nourishment in Latin America's rich natural and cultural environment: “‘Indio’ no es, pues, sólo ese hombre de color bronceado, de ojos rasgados, de pelo lacio y grueso, sino todo aquel que se acrecienta en contacto con los incentivos que le ofrece esta gran naturaleza americana” (6). Scholars of Arguedas would not be remiss to hear in this discourse on the outsized creative force inherent to Latin America's natural landscape, and channeled by its artists, echoes of Arguedas's speech “No soy un aculturado.” Arguedas argues for the creative power that inheres in Peru's stunning natural landscape and dramatic history: “no hay país más diverso, más múltiple en variedad terrena y humana; todos los grados de calor y color, de amor y odio, de urdimbres y sutilezas, de símbolos utilizados e inspiradores. . . . En técnica nos superarán y dominarán, no sabemos hasta qué tiempos, pero en arte podemos ya obligarlos a que aprendan de nosotros” (43-44). As Tarica observes, “Arguedas's ideas

²⁸ It is not just Pereira, but also his daughter, who finds the smell of unwashed bodies and clothes sexually exciting. In the early pages of the novel, Pereira's daughter associates the smell of the Indian who carries her on his back with the smell of the seductor who impregnated her: “el olor que despedía el indio al cual se aferraba para no caer le gustaba por sentirlo parecido al de su seductor” (16). Through this detail, Icaza suggests that no member of the hacienda system—not even the young daughters, who unlike the sons, are ostensibly not having sex with the servants—escape corruption. The corruption is written on their senses.

²⁹ These so-called “essays on identity” include Mariátegui's *Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (1928), José Vasconcelos's *La raza cósmica* (1925), Antonio Pedreira's *Insularismo* (1934), and Fernando Ortiz's *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940), among other texts.

about mestizo language and creativity reflect the influence of Uriel García's *El nuevo indio* (Inner Life 112).

We can see this influence, as well, in Arguedas's representation of the *chichería* in *Los ríos profundos*, and in his generation of an aesthetics of dirt. For Uriel García, the *chichería*, in all its gloomy, grimy, sordidness, is the space where creativity, the defining characteristic of the "new Indian," is best nurtured and cultivated. He dedicates a full chapter of his text, "La caverna de la nacionalidad," to this Peruvian institution, characterizing it as first "matriz," then "invernadero" of Peruvian culture (168, 169). Its life-nourishing powers inhere precisely in its dark dirtiness, which Uriel García exaggerates rather than downplays: "Un sórdido aposento, con los muros ennegrecidos por el humo de todos los días, de todos los años, y aún de todos los siglos, en cuyo fondo tétrico o piélagó insondable las cosas como los hombres apenas se esbozan" (167). The space's resemblance to, alternately, a "vivienda prehistórica" (166), "cueva" (166), "cubil" (167), "madriguera" (167), and "gruta" (172) serves a purpose. The environment invites "el grito de lo espontáneo y elemental" (173). It encourages visitors to leave behind "la vida regulada por la civilidad y el trato urbano, llena de genuflexiones y cortesías" and access and express the more genuine, creative selves at their core (167). This vision of artistic creation—as facilitated by a stripping away of the costumes and ceremonies of modern society and a return to a more natural, "spontaneous" state—chimes with primitivism, a salient current of modernist European artistic production. Uriel García makes explicit this link when he describes the "cartel de pintura chillona" marking the entrance to the *chichería*, as "realista, expresionista, vanguardista" (166, my emphasis).

Alongside offering, through this chapter of *El nuevo indio*, a spirited rejoinder to charges of unsightliness and moral depravity leveled at the *chichería* by Cuzco's elite, Uriel García mocks the related suggestion that the *chichería*, like other mestizo and Indian public spaces, might constitute a breeding place of disease. "¿Es [la chichería] la lepra del 'poblacho mestizo' o el síntoma del 'pueblo enfermo'?" he asks at the chapter's outset. "Nada de eso," is the reply. The *chichería* is rather the "hogar cordial del hombre primitivo y espontáneo" (166). At the end of the essay he returns to the theme of hygiene and disease, designating the "cantina comfortable" and the "sala de juego de un club" as sites of the "pueblo enfermo," because this substitution of the imported cantina or club for the Peruvian *chichería* produces "el hombre desnacionalizado," the true social 'ill.' Through this discourse of illness, Uriel García argues that the attempt to create a more sanitary Cuzco by way of expunging, or transforming beyond recognition, purported sites of disease, such as the *chichería* and public market, produces a social problem of a different, but equally troubling, nature: a people lacking a distinctive national identity. He also points to the class prejudice that underlies the hygienist discourse: it is the gathering places of the poor that are deemed unsightly and dangers to society. The true danger to society, he argues, comes from the elite class's "modernizing" efforts, which are in fact acculturating efforts. This charge motivates the chapter's final, pithy claim: "Entonces, el mal no está abajo, sino arriba" (173).

Recovering Ernesto's Unwritten Letters

"Lies, secrets, silences, and deflections of all sorts are routes taken by voices or messages not granted full legitimacy in order not to be altogether lost. . . . Where can the world's unread letters be *kept*, other than in writing?"

—Barbara Johnson, "Is Writerliness Conservative?"

Though Ernesto's act of composition in the scene of the two letters is fictional, it is nevertheless shaped by the same socio-historical forces we see at work in indigenista writings from the era. His Spanish letter, in fact, can be interpreted as the product of Ernesto subjecting his original vision of the Avenida Condebamba to a literary form of Peru's sanitary campaigns. Though the letter dramatizes a meeting between Antero and Salvinia in a now familiar setting, the Avenida Condebamba, the street is unrecognizable to us. If in the privacy of his thoughts Ernesto allows himself to give free reign to the preferences of his differently constituted sensory body, which perceives the excrement-stained street as a romantic setting for young love, when translating his musings into a Spanish letter, Ernesto feels compelled to "tidy up" the mess:

[H]e ido al amanecer hasta tu puerta. Las estrellas dulces de la aurora se posaban en tu ventana; la luz del amanecer rodeaba tu casa, formaba una corona sobre ella. Y cuando los jilgueros vinieron a cantar desde las ramas de las moreras, cuando llegaron los zorzales y las calandrias, la avenida semejaba la gloria. Me pareció verte entonces, caminando solita, entre dos filas de árboles iluminados. Ninfa adorada, entre las moreras jugabas como una mariposa... (250)

Ernesto strips from his vision of the avenue all that originally made it special and pretty to him. The "fruit-eating birds" become robins and goldfinches, and their unruly ecstasy among the berries becomes sweet singing that evokes the celestial. Red is replaced with the pastels of daybreak and the colorless glow of heaven. The actions of gorging and excreting are transformed into delicate, butterfly-like playing.³⁰

Estelle Tarica, in the only critical work to interpret the scene of the two letters through the lens of its narrative prelude, connects the dots between legitimate literary language and the early twentieth century discourse of cleanliness: "the [Spanish] letter . . . must be associated in the social economy of Abancay with a structure of difference which distinguishes in hierarchical terms between the letrado and the analfabeto, gente de razón and gente sin razón, the clean and the dirty" ("Mestizaje" 156). Ernesto understands intuitively that the Spanish letter, the site of literacy, culture, and reason, must also be the space of the clean; it calls for an entirely different visual system than the one that guides his musings on the street, and he alters his sensibility and imagery accordingly when transitioning from the private act of thinking to the public act of writing. Tarica complicates the purity of the Spanish letter he produces, however, by

³⁰ For this reading of the Spanish letter, I am indebted to groundwork laid by my adviser, Estelle Tarica. Her emphasis on the narrative prelude to the composition of the two letters as preparation for Ernesto's penning of the letters paved the way for my view of the Spanish letter as a "tidying up" of the mulberry tree passage. I am grateful to her for sharing her dissertation with me, where she provides a rich interpretation of this scene. It was a delight to find another critical work that dealt in detail with this neglected passage.

emphasizing the significance of Ernesto's return to his bed of excrement in an Apurímac stable as mental preparation for writing. She terms the site of the letter's composition "double" and characterizes it in the following way: "[Ernesto] is at the school, infused with the values of Hispanic lettered society; yet his writing is embedded in the recollection of the dungheap, in the stables, the lowliest spot on the hacienda and about as far away from school as we can imagine" ("Mestizaje" 153). In Tarica's analysis, through this narrative layering of schoolroom over stable, desk over dungheap, "Ernesto allows the intromission of dirt into that which has radically attempted to cleanse itself of dirt" (156). On its surface, the letter presents itself as proper to the world of Antero and Salvinia, the world of a "hygienic" lettered elite, but because it finds its creative origins in the "dungheap," it carries within it the world of the marginalized, the illiterate, the dirty. What Tarica does not mention, but is critical to an account of excrement's role in the scene, is how Ernesto's musings on the excrement-stained Avenida Condebamba serve as a reverse template for the Spanish letter's celestial imagery. It is not just that Ernesto paradoxically must situate himself on the dungheap, to use Tarica's terms, in order to write, but that the birdsong and crepuscular light we find in his lettered prose are in fact a transposition of the mulberry tree passage's earthier, more elemental imagery. The Spanish letter's origin is doubly excremental.

In this way, the mulberry tree passage, ostensibly a forgettable sidenote, ultimately controls our interpretation of the scene's centerpieces: the Spanish and especially the Quechua letter. The mulberry tree passage brings into relief how the letters might be described as two versions of the same representational problem. There is no room for the dirty beauty of Ernesto's reverie in either representational code. The Spanish letter transforms Ernesto's vision by sanitizing it. In the Quechua letter, a *huayno* takes the place of the images that crowd Ernesto's consciousness as he contemplates what to write. This does not seem to bother Ernesto, who leaves the classroom, as we have seen, filled with pride. And it has satisfied many critics, who describe the Quechua letter as a watershed moment in Peruvian literary history. But the mulberry tree passage, which sets up the scene of the two letters, compels the reader to wonder what a different letter, expressive of Ernesto's decentered sensorium, might look like. This unwritten letter haunts the scene as an unrealized potentiality, a letter beyond the horizon of artistic possibilities that presents itself to Ernesto as he sits in the classroom.

This is not, however, the only unwritten letter that hovers just beyond the page. Ernesto's unwritten excremental letter is joined in its state of extra-textual limbo by the Quechua letter itself. Remember that where the actual Quechua letter should appear in the text, Arguedas provides only the first five words—not even a full sentence—before the original trails off with an ellipsis and the letter begins again, this time in Spanish translation. As noted previously, elsewhere in the novel, when a Quechua poem or song appears, Arguedas always provides the full text in the original, followed by a Spanish translation that occupies a secondary or supplemental position. It is ironic that in this scene, which is specifically about Ernesto's decision to write in Quechua and *not* in Spanish, Arguedas reduces the Quechua letter to a fragment and allows the Spanish translation to take primacy.

We might interpret both unwritten letters as pointing to the same biographical event: Arguedas's decision to leave behind Quechua in order to become a Spanish-

language writer. Arguedas describes his decision as driven by the issue of audience; Spanish is an “idioma obligado” taken up only because to write in Quechua is to create “literatura estrecha y condenada al olvido” (“Entre el kechwa” 36). In *Los ríos profundos*, Arguedas’s autobiographical novel, the author’s fictional avatar also considers the problem of audience, but decides to write in Quechua anyway. As we have seen, Ernesto pauses during the scene of the two letters to consider the futility of writing to an illiterate young girl, but pushes aside his doubts by posing a hypothetical: “¿Y, si fuera posible, si pudiera empezarse?” (250). He writes to an audience that presently does not exist, but could, one day, in a Peru where the Quechua language is valued as a critical element of the nation’s cultural identity. That Arguedas made the opposite decision in his own creative life—putting audience before language, rather than language before audience—is inscribed in the scene by way of the suppression of Quechua at the precise moment where it most deserves foregrounding. Ironically, this interpretation leads us to the conclusion that the scene of *Los ríos profundos* that is about Ernesto, in a moment of epiphanic intensity, choosing Quechua, on a more subtle register is also about Arguedas making the exact opposite decision: turning away from Quechua and choosing Spanish.

Arguedas’s turn away from Quechua is also inscribed in Ernesto’s unwritten letter: it is present in his decision to abandon his excremental vision when he writes to the indigenous young girl. Both decisions, the real one and its fictional avatar, feature a writer leaving behind a mode of expression with which he has the most intuitive, intimate relationship. Ernesto’s vision of the Avenida Condebamba as an ideal setting for courtship is striking and persuasive, yet so transgressive in its reappropriation of the abject that Ernesto lacks the representational system that would allow him to capture it in a love letter. In this way, the scene, which appears to depict the pivotal moment at which a young writer finds his voice, and makes triumphantly present on the page the blend of cultural traditions that constitute his identity, also constructs Ernesto’s Quechua letter as sown with loss and lack. Even with his problem of language temporarily resolved, his favored imagery must be left aside. Ernesto’s unwritten letters, and the unwritten Arguedian texts they symbolize, prompt us to imagine an absent history of Peruvian letters: the Quechua-language corpus never written, the Spanish-language corpus creatively curtailed by the pressures of colonial ideology, which guides authors away from “dirty” spaces like Huanupata and thus puts firm limits on the representation of indigenous and mestizo culture. The aesthetics of dirt Arguedas develops in *Los ríos profundos* constitutes a crucial step beyond this curtailment.

Huanupata: The Politics of Attention

If the scene of the two letters treats the perceived dirtiness of Indian and mestizo bodies and spaces obliquely, Arguedas’s representation of the neighborhood of Huanupata does so literally. Huanupata is a marginal neighborhood and the location of Abancay’s *chicherías*. In the emphasis Arguedas puts on the bars’ dirtiness, we hear echoes of Uriel García: “Oleadas de moscas volaban en las puertas de las chicherías. En el suelo, sobre los desperdicios que arrojaban del interior, caminaba una gruesa manta de moscas. Cuando alguien entraba a las chicherías, las moscas se elevaban del suelo y formaban un remolino. . . . Todo era negro de suciedad y de humo” (208). In *Los ríos*

profundos, the *chichería* takes on the very role that Uriel García describes it playing in modern Peru: it is the site of the generation of a vibrant popular culture. Within these dark, dirty gathering places, musicians perform traditional *huaynos* from different highland regions and improvise songs treating events in Abancay's recent history. In one memorable scene, a musician improvises a saucy lyric expressing solidarity with doña Felipa, a *chichera* and the leader of a recent popular revolt provoked by the abuses of Abancay's hacienda owners (384-387).

Arguedas's depiction of Huanupata's *chicherías* as dirty, smoky, and fly-infested has led critics like Amy Fass Emery to describe Ernesto's relationship to the neighborhood as ambivalent. "Ernesto," Fass Emery writes, "is attracted to and repulsed by the *chichería*" (60). Other critics, mimicking the dominant strain of indigenista discourse sketched out above, treat the *chicherías*—improbable as it might sound—without addressing their dirtiness. Julio Ortega, for example, focuses on the kind of social interaction Huanupata facilitates between different strata of Peruvian society, and avoids any mention of the material conditions in which this interaction takes place.³¹ Ortega's avoidance of the *chichería*'s filth points to the difficulty of the task Arguedas takes on: representing a privileged, almost utopic space, which is also coated with grime and infested by flies.

Fass Emery is right to summon the poles of attraction and repulsion in writing of Huanupata's *chicherías*, but her attribution of both attitudes to Ernesto is a misstep.³² Ernesto's attitude toward Huanupata and its *chicherías* is positive—he introduces it to the reader, after all, as Huanupata's only "barrio alegre"—if at times tentative due to the foreignness of the physical and social environment (he notes that prostitutes frequent the bars), and his youth relative to the bars' other visitors (207). It is the novel's villains who find Huanupata repellent, a fact that guides the reader to identify with Ernesto's preference for Huanupata over other parts of Abancay.

In the following passage, for example, Arguedas juxtaposes two perspectives on Huanupata. The first belongs to a visiting military official, a Colonel stationed in Abancay in the wake of a popular revolt. His visit to Huanupata is cursory and ends with him fleeing the neighborhood, appalled by its smell. Whereas the impressions in the first paragraph are clearly marked as belonging to the Colonel, the description in the following paragraph is attributed to no one. It seems, at first glance, to be filling in the blanks left

³¹ Ortega describes Huanupata in the following way: "Espacio antioficial, en él se conjugan indios, cholos y mestizos: barrio 'alegre', lugar de intermediación étnica y social, es un espacio de activa comunicación. Entre los indios siervos y campesinos y los mestizos y señores de la ciudad, este lugar es un tercer ámbito social: no parece señalar una mera instancia de transición entre uno y otro estrato étnico y social; parece, más bien, un estrato propio: el que corresponde, precisamente, a la intermediación y al intercambio, a la cultura popular del mercado; en parte, al estrato cholo de la sociedad peruana" (64). Flies and dirt are nowhere to be found.

³² Fass Emery cites as evidence of this ambivalence a passage in which Ernesto describes his feelings of discomfort while sitting in a *chichería*. But her argument is based on a misreading of this passage. Ernesto's discomfort has little to do with the space itself; it is founded, rather, on his embarrassment at appearing in the *chichería* dressed in an elegant new suit: "Sentí un violento impulso por salir a la calle Mis zapatos de hule, los puños largos de camisa, mi corbata, me cohibían, me transtornaban" (375). Ernesto feels awkward because his tie, shirt cuffs, and rubber shoes do not "match" the *chicherías*' aesthetic—an aesthetic that actually puts him at ease. His discomfort is not with the *chicherías* but with the segment of society that requires he wear a suit and tie. He states on the previous page, "Yo hubiera deseado haberme vestido con mi traje viejo; pero no era posible en día domingo" (374).

by the Colonel's cursory visit by tracing the foul odor he has remarked upon to its source: the abundance of pigs and soured puddles. But closer attention to this passage reveals that it in fact carries out an effective rebuttal to the Colonel's assessment by making note of the elements of the neighborhood that are likely the source of his disgust—the pigs, the flies, the stagnant water—and providing an alternate perspective on them as sites of visual interest. It constitutes another deeply perspectival passage disguised as objective description, expressing a contestatory sensorium so convincingly that the reader easily affirms the narrator's appreciation of Huanupata's muck. Of course, the reader has been carefully prepared for this moment of encounter. Huanupata is central to Arguedas's project in *Los ríos profundos* of representing mestizo and Indian spaces, such as working-class neighborhoods and their *chicherías*, as vibrant cultural hubs, rather than slums or sites of indecent activity. Here, too, Arguedas's depiction of Huanupata and its *chicherías* resonates with Uriel García's *El nuevo indio*, but rather than grounding his defense of the neighborhood in the concept of the primitive, Arguedas's narrator models an approach to Huanupata as a site of sensory richness accessed through attention to the small yet intriguing details of its material life.

The description of Huanupata comes toward the end of the novel, in the wake of the departure of the army regiment sent to Abancay to quell the *chicheras'* popular revolt. Ernesto relates the Colonel's tour through the neighborhood while thinking back over the tumult the military presence has caused in the town:

Del Coronel me dijeron que una sola vez fue a Huanupata. . . . Me contaron que cuando fue al barrio de las picanterías pasó por las calles muy rápido. Lo escoltaban varios oficiales y caballeros. Concluyó la visita lamentando la repugnancia que le causó el olor que emanaba de las chicherías y chozas.

La gente criaba muchos cerdos en ese barrio. Las moscas hervían felices, persiguiéndose, zumbando sobre la cabeza de los transeúntes. Los charcos de agua se pudrían con el calor, iban tomando colores diferentes aunque siempre densos. Pero sobre algunas tapias muy altas, allí, bordeando Huanupata, colgaban sus ramas algunos árboles de limón real. (407)

The two accounts of Huanupata juxtaposed here offer a lesson in the politics of description, underscoring that the first step in rendering an object or scene in language is, in fact, recognizing it as a scene worthy of detailed attention. This act of recognition itself thus relies on the seeing subject's own class and cultural background. The Colonel walks quickly through Huanupata, finding nothing to look at. He makes note only of sensory information registered passively, even involuntarily: an odor that wafts toward him. Even then, he does not bother to assign any specificity to the odor, merely describing it as "repugnant." The narrator, on the other hand, finds much in the neighborhood that is worthy of attention. He makes two attempts at capturing the flies' liveliness in language, first likening their movement to the ebullience of water brought to a boil, then to the darting to and fro proper to a game of chase. His use of the verb "zumar"—a word related to Ernesto's prized possession, the *zumbayllu*, a spinning top made of natural materials—suggests that the flies belong to the realm of privileged objects and beings in the novel. The narrator's description of the puddles underscores the

role time plays in the apprehension of beauty: the puddle only reveals its visual richness to those who slow sufficiently to watch its colors shift in the light. In short, the passage suggests that Huanupata holds sensory rewards for those who approach it as a place that merits contemplation.

Both images—the flies and the puddle—reference the process of decomposition. The neighborhood’s name, Huanupata, reminds us that this process constitutes the end point of life—the breaking down of matter to its basic elements—as well as its point of origin as *huanu*, or fertilizer. Indeed, the narrator moves immediately from flies and soured water to a stand of lemon trees marking Huanupata’s border, reminding the reader that flies and other decomposers are vital components of a healthy ecosystem, enabling plants, flowers, and fruit—all belonging to the conventional category of the beautiful—to thrive: “Pero sobre algunas tapias muy altas, allí, bordeando Huanupata, colgaban sus ramas algunos árboles de limón real.” “Pero” functions as an additive here, marking the narrator’s turn to the neighborhood’s most winning characteristic, proffered as the ultimate rebuttal to the Colonel’s disgust. The narrator refers to the trees by their lengthier Spanish name—“árboles de limón real”—underscoring their link to the royal, and describes their juice, when mixed with sugar, as “el manjar más delicado y poderoso del mundo,” tasting “como si se bebiera la luz del sol” (408). Of course, it is not the lemon alone that produces this delicate “manjar,” but the sour acidity of the lemon mixed with the sweetness of sugar. Likewise, it is the juxtaposition—and even interdependence—of flies and music, disorderliness and poetry, muck and trees, the narrator suggests in the passage, that creates the fecund complexity of Huanupata and its *chicherías*.

Conclusion

In a scene toward the end of *Los ríos profundos*, Ernesto sits in a *chichería*, talking to a musician whom he first met years ago while travelling with his father. He sits on the ground beside the musician, close enough to—in a gesture of tenderness and familiarity—take hold of the end of his thick, patterned scarf. The pair chats happily in Quechua, discussing music, the scene of their last meeting, and the one-eyed woman who knitted the unusual scarf. About halfway through the conversation, Ernesto breaks the flow of dialogue to offer the following information to the reader: “El cantor olía a sudor, a suciedad de telas de lana; pero yo estaba acostumbrado a ese tipo de emanaciones humanas; no sólo no me molestaban, sino que despertaban en mí recuerdos de mi niñez. Era un indio como los de mi pueblo. No de hacienda” (382). Throughout the novel, Arguedas articulates the preferences and reactions of Ernesto’s sensorial body in a universalizing fashion: his savoring of the view of the Avenida Condebamba is ours to share. As readers, in fact, we are subtly called into his body as, through moments of politicized description, we experience highlands Peru through his sensorium. Here, however, Arguedas takes a different approach, making the positive representation of dirt—in this case sweat-stained wool—an exclusionary, rather than universalizing, gesture. Ernesto explains his attraction to the Indian’s smell through reference to childhood memories, private experiences that are untransferrable to the reader. With this passage, we are thus placed back into our own bodies, from which place we can learn

about and respect Ernesto's enjoyment of the Indian's smell, but are barred, by difference in background, from sharing in it.

Arguedas's treatment of natural bodily odors here, however, resembles the representation of the dirty or abject throughout the novel in other key respects. Ernesto first describes the musician as smelling "a sudor, a suciedad de telas de lana," but quickly dispenses with the vocabulary of dirtiness and replaces it with a more suggestive, and more precise, construction. The phrase "emanaciones humanas" emphasizes that the smell of sweat and well-worn clothing is a natural human smell, one we mask with soaps and perfumes. Ernesto's powerful reframing of bodily odors as "emanaciones humanas"—both his action in doing so and the phrase itself—encapsulates the values and practices implied by sensory complexity as an approach to bodily life. These include remaining open to the value of a wide range of sensory experience; looking beneath the label of "dirty" to investigate the true nature or substance of a person or place; using language as a tool for reorienting our relationship to the physical world, particularly toward that which has been deemed "matter out of place"; and finding pleasure in the juxtaposition—and interdependence—of distinct sensory experiences, such as looking up from Huanupata's muck to glimpse lemon trees in the distance.

The olfactory experience narrated in this scene—smelling the scent of human sweat and unwashed clothing—holds particular importance for Arguedas. He features it not just in *Los ríos profundos*, but also in the "Primer diario" of *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*, in the entry dated May 11, 1968. He recounts returning to San Juan de Lucanas, the location of the *ayllu* where he spent critical spans of his childhood, once he himself had become a respected professional. Largely spoiled for him by the exaggerated adulation of the townspeople, the visit is redeemed by his re-encounter with don Felipe Maywa, the leader of the community, whom Arguedas had looked up to as a child "como a un sabio, como a una montaña condescendiente" (11). The climax of this experience comes when, walking arm in arm with don Felipe, Arguedas smells "su olor de indio, ese hálito amado de bayeta sucia de sudor" (11). The smell of the sweat-stained "bayeta" is beloved ("amado") to Arguedas because of its connection to childhood memories; it allows him to momentarily inhabit a world that no longer exists. The musician's scent "a sudor, a suciedad de telas de lana" plays an analogous role in *Los ríos profundos*, connecting Ernesto to the *ayllu* Indian culture central to his identity, which he misses profoundly in Abancay.

No analysis of sensory experience and memory in modernist literature would be complete without reference to Proust. It is of a piece with the aesthetic and political projects of *Los ríos profundos* that Arguedas should transform Proust's madeleine into a sweat-stained cloth. The juxtaposition of the two objects brings into relief the sensory delight embodied by the madeleine itself: its elegantly sculpted surface and scalloped edges, its delicacy as it dissolves on the tongue. Despite modernism's involvement with the realm of the anti-aesthetic, its emblematic cake is an aesthetic object *par excellence*. The object that mediates Ernesto's connection with treasured childhood memories is, in comparison, almost incomparably humble. And yet, in *Los ríos profundos* Arguedas creates a narrative context where the replacement of the madeleine with the *bayeta* is credible.

In fact, we might describe the rich frame of reference Arguedas gives the reader for approaching the musician's "olor de indio" as a welcome, comforting scent,

summoning the richness of *ayllu* culture, as fundamentally expressive of Arguedas's narrative activism in *Los ríos profundos*. Even though Ernesto's evocation of the musician's scent does not make any claim or demand on the reader—as we have seen, it does the opposite, excusing the reader from any responsibility for mirroring the protagonist's pleasure—we feel poised to approach the scent with openness and curiosity in any case, due to the persuasive representation of sensory complexity throughout the novel. *Los ríos profundos* is about many things, as the thick literature on the novel attests, but that it is also about this renewed experience of embodied life cannot be dismissed.

Chapter Three

The Narratee, The Reader, and the Problem of Judgment in Juan Rulfo's "¡Diles que no me maten!"

Throughout his fiction Juan Rulfo exhibits a distinctive interest in narrative frames. His narrators, often bent on self-revelation, offer lengthy and tormented confessions to largely undefined narratees. Through use of this narrative technique in both of his volumes of prose fiction, *El llano en llamas* (1953) and *Pedro Páramo* (1955), Rulfo highlights the importance of analysis of what Genette has termed the "instance of narration" in order to arrive at a thorough, nuanced understanding of his fiction. With "instance of narration," Genette refers to the interaction between the narrator, the narratee (or audience who receives the narration), and the place where this exchange (whether oral or written) takes place. There is a strange tension, however, within Rulfo's emphasis on the narrative frame: it both attracts our attention as readers because it is so consistently present across his oeuvre, and seems to discourage lengthy consideration by way of its underdevelopment in relation to other aspects of Rulfo's fiction, particularly the spectacular representations of violence for which he is known. The presence of narrative frames in Rulfo's work is, paradoxically, both striking and understated.

This duality is particularly prominent in the representation of one aspect of the narrative frame: the narratee. The narratee is constantly suggested, invoked, and addressed by Rulfo's first-person narrators, sometimes with great urgency, but rarely emerges in full light as a defined character. And yet, I argue, analysis of the construction of the minimally present narratee in Rulfo's prose fiction is crucial to an understanding of the way the stories represent and problematize the issues of judgment and justice that are central to Rulfo's oeuvre and especially the stories that make up *El llano en llamas*. In this chapter, I will focus on one story from the collection, "¡Diles que no me maten!", in order to explore how Rulfo mobilizes the narratological category of the narratee in order to actively involve the reader in the difficult task of judgment. In "¡Diles que no me maten!", the narratee—and, I will argue, by extension the reader—is interpellated into what critic Geoffrey Galt Harpham describes as the "powerful and vulnerable" role of judge, faced with the responsibility of deciding who is in the right and who in the wrong in a conflict between two neighbors (xiii). The story presents the reader, through various characters, different models of judgment, and thematizes in particular the crucial role played by multiperspectivalism—the ability to see a conflict from many different sides—in arriving at just decisions. At the same time, Rulfo explores a limitation of this perspectival flexibility: its potential for hindering our ability to move beyond the contemplation of a conflict's essential ambiguity to what Harpham calls "responsible action" (261). Through "¡Diles que no me maten!", Rulfo suggests both the importance and difficulty of systematizing justice within the modern nation-state. At the same time, through placing ambiguity in a socio-cultural context, Rulfo stages the modernist preoccupation with aesthetic ambiguity as itself an ethical problem rather than its conventional theorization by literary critics as "an aesthetic good" (Chatman 261).

Rulfo and the Critical Tradition

Despite Rulfo's consistent experimentation with the narrative frame, critics have almost unanimously theorized Rulfo's narrators as not speaking to anyone at all—a fact we might trace back both to the minimalist fashion in which Rulfo establishes the narratee's presence, and, more broadly speaking, what narratologists have described as the narratee's inherent obscurity. Stephen T. Clinton writes of Rulfo's "Talpa," "The narrator is his own judge and jury, and the structure and the use of language show his chronic tendency toward self-castigation" (525). Along similar lines, William Rowe concludes of all the stories in *El llano en llamas* that take the form of a monologue, "[The narrators] listen to themselves speak so as to become, in a sense, interlocutors to themselves" (*Rulfo* 77). Carlos Blanco Aguinaga writes in his influential 1955 piece "Realidad y estilo de Juan Rulfo," "todo diálogo, en vez de ir de un yo a un tú, va siempre, en realidad, de un yo hacia sí mismo, convirtiéndose en un meditar hacia dentro ajeno a las formas del cambio" (68). Florence Olivier submits that while we could, in interpreting the monologic stories, posit "sin cortapisas a alguien que estaría escuchando ese relato," there would be little point "puesto que está totalmente excluido del discurso" (630). In this way, critics have flattened Rulfo's experiments with a narrative frame that turns on dialogue, or at least the presence of a speaker and a listener, into monologue. While it is certainly possible for narrators to serve as their own narratees—Gerald Prince writes, "there are many instances in which the narrator does not direct his narration towards anyone but himself and is his own narratee"—this is simply not the case (or at least not always) in Rulfo's fiction ("Notes Toward" 102).

Monologue becomes, in the first half of the twentieth century, a term of prestige among writers and critics because of its connection to European literary modernism. In the context of Mexican cultural history, we might interpret the critical consensus that Rulfo writes monologues as part and parcel of a larger preoccupation with whether Mexican cultural production, and by extension Mexico itself, might be considered 'modern.' In his classic work *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (1969), Carlos Fuentes identifies Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* as Latin American literature's first step toward a new form of fiction. Ironically, this "new" narrative form participates in what Fuentes describes as the "crisis internacional de la novela," a process of questioning the novel's continued viability in the wake of the great novels of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which are seen as having exhausted the genre's inventive potential (17). In other words, Fuentes makes the claim that the new Latin American novel overcomes a temporal lag and a regional focus in order to engage for the first time in an international, contemporary conversation about the genre. As recently as 2006, in a contribution to Franco Moretti's edited volume *The Novel*, Ernesto Franco writes of Rulfo's literary creation in a way that echoes Fuentes' construction of Rulfo as a bridge between regional and international literary circles and concerns: "With *Pedro Páramo*, Juan Rulfo revealed the way in which the culture of an entire continent first found its own voice. . . . Once this voice had been found, Latin American could finally converse with the rest of the world" (856). Fuentes and Franco's statements, separated by almost four decades, reflect an enduring desire to establish *Pedro Páramo* as a crucial step forward for not just Mexican, but Latin American fiction: the creation of a cosmopolitan, internationally viable mode of literary expression. We can situate critics' description of Rulfo as making

use of monologue and interior monologue within this larger concern with establishing Mexico's literary modernity. Through describing Rulfo as using wide use of (interior) monologue, critics implicitly put the Mexican author in conversation with modernist stars Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, and James Joyce.

Critics' hesitancy to recognize the presence of the narratee in Rulfo's fiction also has a universal explanation—one that addresses not the anxieties of the cultural periphery but the normative practices of narrative theory. In *Narrative Discourse*, Genette characterizes narrative studies as habitually undertheorizing what he refers to as the "narrating instance": the place and time where the narration takes place and "all those people who participate, even though passively, in this narrating activity" (212). The narratee is a key player in this plane of narrative: the essential (though usually much less visible or audible) counterpart to the story's narrator, the individual who listens to (or reads) the narrator's discourse. According to Genette, narrative studies has exhibited "a sort of hesitation, no doubt an unconscious one, to recognize and respect the autonomy of that instance, or even simply its specificity" (213). He describes critics (he cites Todorov specifically) as failing to distinguish between the author's act of writing the book and the narrator's act of narrating it; along the same lines, the reader's activity is often lumped together with the narratee's (213). In *Story and Discourse*, Seymour Chatman makes a similar point about the narratee in particular, suggesting that the figure's marginal status within narrative studies has to do with his/her inherent obscurity as the often silent receiver of narrative discourse: "[The narratee] is much less well-known [than the narrator]; indeed, his very existence has only recently been recognized. Studies of the narratee raise several interesting questions: Who precisely is he? How do we identify him? What narrative tasks does he perform?" (253). The narratee *listens*—and thus is difficult to hear and see within the text.

Genette's moment of self-critique—calling attention to narratology's failure "to recognize and respect the autonomy of [the instance of narration]"—is an important one. And yet, I would argue—along with an important line of narratologists who have set to answering the provocative questions Chatman poses about the narratee—it is a mistake to describe those who are present to the narrating instance as participating, as Genette puts it, "passively." Critic Mary Ann Piwowarczyk argues, on the contrary, that the narratee "may ... be defined as an agent whose actions influence the development of the text and may even extend beyond the limits of the text itself" (173). I will argue alongside Piwowarczyk that this is indeed the case in Rulfo's fiction, as we will see below in "¡Diles que no me maten!".

While classical narratologists such as Gérard Genette, Seymour Chatman, Gerald Prince, Mary Ann Piwowarczyk, and Terry Peavler (a Rulfo critic who takes a narratological approach) will be helpful to me in teasing out the role the narrating instance and the narratee play in Rulfo's fiction, in order to grapple with the previously overlooked details of Rulfo's narrative play I will work with unnatural narratology. A recent offshoot of narratological studies, unnatural narratology seeks to call attention to a widespread, yet unacknowledged "mimetic bias" that undergirds classical narratology (Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, Richardson 114). In response to classical narratology's lack of recognition of anti-mimetic elements of prose fiction, unnatural narratologists create terms and interpretive models that facilitate the identification and interpretation of "unnatural" elements of prose fiction. As I will show, unnatural narratology's terms and

tools shed light on a crucial moment in “¡Diles que no me maten!” in which the main character, Juvencio, in an attempt to win the sympathies of the narratee, seizes control of the story from the third-person narrator, of whom, classical narratology says, he should not properly have awareness. This rupture in the story’s mimetic code constitutes a key moment in Rulfo’s text, though not an unprecedented one, as I will show through reference to related moments in Rulfo’s fiction. Juvencio’s urgent attempt to sway the judgment of the narratee and win his sympathies constructs the narratee, I argue, as a crucial participant in “Diles.” More than the narrator’s interlocutor, the narratee constitutes a significant judging presence for the characters whose actions make up the story’s narrative trajectory.

In Rulfo’s fiction, important interactions takes place in this auxiliary space, not the diegesis where the conflicts that wrack and warp his characters take place, but the space in which their actions, and the pressures that shape their actions, are considered, weighed, and judged by a third party—a listening party.³³ Through his attention to the narrative frame and more specifically, the narratee, Rulfo constructs listening as a crucial, active mode of participation in *El llano en llamas*. “The narrator-narratee relation,” Chatman writes, “can parallel or confirm in some way the themes of the object story” (259). This is certainly the case in *El llano en llamas*, a volume that is principally about different characters’ struggles to be heard, whether by a parent, a neighbor, a judge, a military officer, or the state. The poor, rural, marginalized population Rulfo writes about in his fiction is one whose voice the postrevolutionary Mexican government ostensibly existed in order to heed and represent, but one whose needs were repeatedly overlooked in the interest both of the same elite the Revolution purportedly overthrew and of a growing urban middle class. Rulfo’s fiction represents a daring, canny effort to represent and allow us to listen to the voices of this abandoned sector of Mexican society, whose stagnation and misery are nowhere to be seen in the official account of the “success” of the Revolution as articulated by the Mexican government during the 1950s.³⁴

Rulfo’s emphasis on the narratee, in “¡Diles que no me maten!”, as well as other stories,³⁵ has important consequences for the figure of the reader. In his foundational work on the narratee, “Introduction to the Story of the Narratee,” Gerald Prince characterizes the “most obvious role” of the narratee as “that of relay between the narrator and the reader(s), or rather between the author and the reader(s)” (229). While acknowledging the distinction between narratee and reader on which Prince (rightly) insists, I will argue that in “¡Diles que no me maten!” Rulfo constructs the narratee as the reader’s double, her stand-in within the world of the story. The reader is privy to the

³³ Genette locates the narratee with respect to time through the term “narrating instance,” but we can also attend to the spatial qualities of her presence. Peavler uses the term “situación narracional,” or narrative situation, encompassing both spatial and temporal coordinates (16).

³⁴ For an informative account of the political situation Rulfo responds to in the 1950s, see Carlos Blanco Aguinaga’s Introduction to the Cátedra edition of *El llano en llamas*. In *Modernism and Hegemony*, Neil Larsen has criticized Rulfo for not dealing more directly with the politics of the moment, and, in particular, for failing to speak specifically of the State’s role in creating conditions of deep inequality. Blanco Aguinaga, points out that authors such as José Revueltas, who attempt “una nueva manera de escritura revolucionaria . . . pasarán temporadas en la cárcel junto a ferrocarrileros y otros obreros levantiscos” (14). For Blanco Aguinaga, one of Rulfo’s extraordinary gifts is the ability to “presentar las cosas como eran—pero evitando en lo posible las referencias concretas a la Historia” in order to avoid censorship (14).

³⁵ Terry Peavler argues that of the seventeen stories that make up the volume, “sólo hay dos en que no es posible establecer, aunque sea vagamente, la presencia física de un narratorio” (17).

(mostly) same stories as the narratee,³⁶ engages in the same (or at least a similar) act of listening, and is faced with the same pressure to judge and decide who is in the right and who is in the wrong.

This task is not straightforward. The stories in *El llano en llamas* are constructed so as to make judgments of right and wrong difficult if not impossible. In his 1965 book-length work, *El arte de Juan Rulfo*, Hugo Rodríguez Alcalá emphasizes Rulfo's preference for ambiguity: "Rulfo, al parecer, no quiere que las cosas sean claras" (23). On Rodríguez Alcalá's view, "tal ambigüedad y tal borrosidad" are "notas esenciales de su narrativa, resultado de arbitrios estilísticos sabiamente manejados, que, a su vez, responden a una visión de la vida y del arte" (23).³⁷ Rodríguez Alcalá goes on to argue that Rulfo sees Mexicans and perhaps all human beings as hermetic—incomprehensible to others and perhaps themselves—leading to their representation as impenetrable and inexplicable in Rulfo's fiction (23). In this chapter I will argue, however, that ambiguity and indecision are only penultimate stops in the journey on which Rulfo takes his readers. I will focus on "¡Diles que no me maten!" (touching on other stories and *Pedro Páramo* in the process) in order to analyze how Rulfo creates ambiguity—a crowning aesthetic value of modernist fiction³⁸—only to problematize it by contextualizing it within larger social conflicts. Rulfo's fiction suggests that while perspectival flexibility—the ability to see a situation from multiple points of view—is crucial to the creation of a just society, so as well is the ability to move beyond ambiguity to judgment, even when this act causes the partial occlusion of a truth that multiperspectivalism renders visible. "¡Diles que no me maten!" makes clear the value of listening to competing narratives, but it also suggests that a functional state calls for something narrative indeterminacy (however great its virtues) can never provide: a commitment to move through ambiguity to judgment and just action.

Ambiguity in "¡Diles que no me maten!": Juvencio the Unredeemable?

In his Introduction to the Cátedra edition of *El llano en llamas*, Critic Carlos Blanco Aguinaga characterizes the 1950s as a moment of reflection and transition for Mexican artists and intellectuals in terms of their relationship to the Revolution and the

³⁶ In *Pedro Páramo*, for example, it becomes clear that interactions have taken place between Juan Preciado (narrator) and Dorotea (narratee) that have been left out of the text and are irretrievable by the reader.

³⁷ Critics throughout the decades consistently identify ambiguity as a core value and achievement in Rulfo's work. In addition Hugo Rodríguez Alcalá (1965), see also Carlos Blanco Aguinaga's "Realidad y estilo de Juan Rulfo" (1955), Carlos Fuentes' *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* (México: Cuadernos de Joaquín Mortiz, 1969), Gary Brower's "*Diles que no me maten*: Aproximación a su estructura y significado" (*Nueva narrativa hispanoamericana* 3:1 [1973]), Antonio Alatorre's "¿Qué es la crítica literaria?" (*Revista de la Universidad de México* 27 [1973]), Raquel Manning's "En torno a la muerte en el cuento "¡Diles que no me maten!" de Juan Rulfo" (*Publications of the Missouri Philological Association* 9 [1984]), and Pedro García's "Drama y tragedia en "¡Diles que no me maten!" (*AlterTexto* 2:4 [2004]).

³⁸ Erich Auerbach writes in "The Brown Stocking" that Virginia Woolf and other modernist writers seek to represent "not one order and one interpretation, but many, which may either be those of different persons or of the same person at different times; so that overlapping, complementing, and contradiction yield something that we might call a synthesized cosmic view or at least a challenge to the reader's will to interpretive synthesis" (549). Rulfo, I will argue, shows how this "challenge . . . to interpretive synthesis" plays out in the broader social world.

postrevolutionary Mexican state (12). The Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) promised the dissolution of a powerful oligarchy and its replacement with a government that represented the interests of the peasantry and urban poor. The Revolution had a strong molding influence on the generation of artists and intellectuals working in its wake, perhaps best exemplified by the work of the Mexican muralists, whose work reflects revolutionary ideals both in the popular topics it takes up and the public form it takes. By mid-century, however, intellectuals and artists no longer assumed that the Revolution and its aftermath should constitute the gravitational center of their creative production.

Blanco Aguinaga describes Mexican writers and artists during the 1950s as fitting into one of two broad currents. The first current comprises writers and artists who leave behind the “expresión artística de la retórica revolucionaria” (12)—and the concept of Mexican particularity it encompassed—in order to turn to “expresión personal, subjetiva, y universal” (13). Upon seeing tangible transformations in Mexico’s cultural and social panorama—“más prensa en la que publicar, más galerías de arte en las que exhibir sus telas, mejores sueldos en la Universidad, nuevo teatro, círculos más amplios en que moverse y montar fiestas”—these artists come to believe it is time to move beyond a mode of representation and a set of concerns tied to the past in order to create new forms of art that reflect “un nuevo México” (12). Blanco Aguinaga singles out Octavio Paz (and particularly his 1950 publication *El laberinto de la soledad*) as representing this tendency. But he argues that there is another intellectual current active in Mexico at this time: “no deja de haber quien piensa que no es que la Revolución haya llegado a su meta, sino que no se ha cumplido, o que ha sido traicionada y que por eso . . . resulta ya tan vacía la estética oficialista” (13). It is in this critical intellectual current that Blanco Aguinaga places Rulfo; he goes on to characterize his literary project as the elaboration of “una estética revolucionaria auténticamente crítica” (13). That is, Blanco Aguinaga characterizes Rulfo as among those Mexican intellectuals who insist on the necessity of returning to the Revolution, both its initial promises and their ultimate betrayals, in order to understand the contemporary Mexican moment.

The story of the betrayal of the promises of the Mexican Revolution is a thread that runs throughout Rulfo’s fiction. Most relevant to the political significance of Rulfo’s foregrounding of the narrative frame, and underscoring of the role of the narratee, is Rulfo’s problematization of justice. Rulfo returns again and again to broken systems of justice-making, representing systems that have either been corrupted by the agendas of particular interests, are purely formal in their functioning, are vigilante in nature, or are simply ineffectual. In “Texto histórico y texto social,” a study of the imprint history makes in the writings of Rulfo, critic Evodio Escalante observes that in various texts Rulfo focuses on the “arbitrariedades cometidas por el aparato judicial” due to corruption and flagrant illegality within the very institution that “se supone existe para dispensar justicia” (570). But alongside a representation of the constant violation of justice, Rulfo offers a problematization of the very possibility of systematizing a deterministic version of justice through presenting the narratee, and by association the reader, with a series of conflicts that question the possibility of arriving at a just resolution. Rulfo’s interrogation of justice as concept and system is both specific to Mexico and universal; the movement back and forth between these two different realms is a hallmark of his fiction. The conflict between the neighbors in “¡Diles que no me maten!”, for example, has resonances with ancient stories, such as those from the Hebrew Bible (two patriarchs

living in an arid climate clash over access to water),³⁹ and with the specifics of twentieth-century Mexican history.

Rulfo's narratee, approached by characters (and sometimes character-narrators) who seek out his judgment, constitutes an invitation—or, perhaps more accurately, a demand—that the reader occupy the position of judge. The title “¡Diles que no me maten!” itself—a command—demonstrates how the reader is from the first interpellated into a role of judge alongside the narratee. The vagueness of the narratee in Rulfo's stories further facilitates readerly identification: the narratee has no specific qualities that distance or disassociate the reader. Critically, the act of judgment to which the reader is invited is always impossibly complex. In Rulfo's fiction, the narratee/reader's decision in the name of justice is always a violation as much as it is an affirmation.⁴⁰ Through offering the reader this experience of socially contextualized indeterminacy, Rulfo exposes the ethical underbelly of the hallowed modernist value of ambiguity, suggesting its limitations when faced with such real-world problems as the creation of a judicial system that offers equal treatment and protection under the law.

“¡Diles que no me maten!” narrates the far-reaching effects of a conflict between two families, headed respectively by Juvencio Nava, a cattle farmer, and his wealthy neighbor and *compadre*,⁴¹ don Lupe. What ostensibly begins as a positive relationship, rooted in the trust, respect, and commitment to mutual support related with the institution of *compadrazgo* in Mexico, grows strained during a drought, when don Lupe denies Juvencio's cattle, “hostigados por el hambre,” access to his verdant pastures (105). Desperate to save his starving cows, Juvencio takes matters into his own hands; he creates an opening in the fence separating the two properties and herds his cattle through to feed. Though the narrator's account of the neighbors' subsequent actions has a farcical ring—“de día se tapaba el agujero y de noche se volvía a abrir”—things turn quite serious when don Lupe threatens to kill the next of Juvencio's cows that he finds on his land (105). When he makes good on this threat, Juvencio—in an acute escalation of the violence—brutally murders don Lupe and spends the next thirty-five years running from the law. This dramatic series of events constitutes the story's backstory. In the story's historical present, Juvencio, now an old man, has been detained and is finally executed by don Lupe's son, an army colonel, as revenge for his father's murder. The story narrates Juvencio's detention, judgment, execution, and the immediate aftermath of his death.

³⁹ The parallels between Rulfo's fiction and the Hebrew Bible are numerous and intriguing. They range from correspondences between characters (Pedro Páramo, patriarch of Comala in *Pedro Páramo*, resembles the Bible's Jacob in a number of ways; to give just one example, both characters are associated with stones) to prose style at the level of the sentence, to approach to representing reality. While many critics have studied the role of religion and even Biblical stories and concepts in Rulfo's fiction, no one has yet sought to understand how the Hebrew Bible as a system of representation (its use of symbolism, its mode of representing psychological depth, its prose art) imprints Rulfo's fiction. I plan to investigate this intertextuality further in future research.

⁴⁰ Here I draw on Geoffrey Galt Harpham, who describes ethical action as necessarily violating at the same time that it affirms: “the fact that any choice can be reconciled with ‘principle’ also means that any choice can also be shown to be incompatible with principle or unethical because it violates some other, entirely credible principle. Thus every ‘ethical’ decision violates some law or other, and violates it precisely because it is ‘ethical’” (29).

⁴¹ Literally, “co-parent,” though normally translated as “godparent” or “sponsor,” *compadrazgo* is a form of ritual kinship with roots in the Catholic church. I will explore its particular manifestation in Latin American society later in this chapter.

“¡Diles que no me maten!” masterfully traps the reader in a state of indecision. Who is in the right and who is in the wrong? The details of the conflict prevent the reader from arriving at any satisfactory conclusion. No sooner does the reader articulate to herself an argument for finding Juvencio in the right than consideration of a previously overlooked detail tips the scales of justice toward don Lupe and his son. The vacillation between sympathy for and condemnation of Juvencio in this excerpt from Gary Brower’s “Diles que no me maten: Aproximación a su estructura y significado” is typical of critical approaches to Rulfo’s story:

Al principio simpatizamos con un viejo que rueda [sic] por su vida. Después, dudamos de nuestra primera simpatía cuando se revela el asesinato de Don Lupe. Entonces, pensamos en la vida de sufrimiento y simpatizamos con Juvencio otra vez. Y al fin encontramos lo más problemática de la cuestión de justicia cuando es revelado quien es el Coronel y la *manera* en que murió su padre, que es bastante horripilante. (232)

“¡Diles que no me maten!” sends the reader into an endless loop of consideration and reconsideration.

The story’s complexity resides in not just the presentation of various viewpoints on the conflict between don Lupe and its aftermath, but in the intricacy of the story’s narrative structure. Rulfo divides the story into five sections presented out of chronological order, whose actual chronology is impossible to discern.⁴² The story is recursive in the sense that we hear about the same set of events—the conflict between Juvencio and don Lupe and its aftermath—more than one time, and yet our understanding of these events, and especially the motives behind them, remains full of holes. Essential questions are never answered, and the information we are given is unreliable because it originates from highly interested sources whose testimony is marked by the instinct for self-preservation, the desire to justify brutal acts of violence, and each character’s impulse to present his case in the most favorable light. In this way, Rulfo entangles the complexities of plot with the problems of narrative perspective: because the story—in Rulfo’s typical fashion—is so deeply perspectival, we are unable to arrive at an authoritative version of events. The *szujet*’s nonchronology underscores this baffling of readerly certainty: if we are unable to even shuffle the five sections into their proper, chronological order, how secure can we feel in our ability to judge right from wrong?

Juvencio awakens the reader’s distaste from the story’s opening scene, a dramatic dialogue between himself and his son, Justino. Juvencio begs Justino, who appears at the military outpost where his father has been detained, to intervene on his behalf. The story’s title comes from the pitiful opening lines: “¡Diles que no me maten, Justino! Anda, vete a decirles eso. Que por caridad” (104). The son’s response is frosty. He is hesitant to draw attention to himself out of fear the colonel will discover that he is Juvencio’s son and order his execution alongside his father’s. But his reluctance to

⁴² For example, it is not clear when in time the opening dialogue between Juvencio and his son Justino takes place. Much like *Pedro Páramo*, “¡Diles que no me maten!” is a puzzle whose pieces do not all fit back together.

intervene on Juvencio's behalf is also rooted in the complexity of the relationship between the two men, hinted at by his words, "Según eso, yo soy tu hijo" (104). While the reader receives little information about Juvencio as a father, we are able to cobble together a picture of his lack of regard for family—and pretty much anyone save himself—through comments he makes throughout the story. When Justino asks who would care for his wife and eight children, should he be executed alongside his father, Juvencio responds without hesitation, "La Providencia, Justino. Ella se encargará de ellos" (105). Juvencio describes his own lack of worth compellingly: "Ya no valgo nada. No tardaré en morirme solito, derrengado de viejo"; and yet, he asks his son to risk his own life, and by association the welfare of his wife and children, in order to buy himself a little more time (110).

The reader is also repelled by Juvencio's attitude toward his own crime. Juvencio uses the language of obligation to describe his murderous act, masking his decision to take the extreme measure of killing his neighbor as obedience to an unspecified law. Through use of free indirect discourse, Rulfo provides us access to Juvencio's justificatory thoughts on the crime: "Quién le iba a decir que volvería aquel asunto tan viejo Aquel asunto de cuando *tuvo que matar* a don Lupe" (emphasis mine, 105). His thoughts take the exact same shape in the following paragraph: "Don Lupe Terreros, el dueño de la Puerta de Piedra Al que él, Juvencio Nava, tuvo que matar" (105). While Juvencio might have felt obligated to kill don Lupe according to an unwritten law of revenge, we later find out he did so in such a way that he prolonged don Lupe's death and maximized his suffering. At no time in the story, even when confronted with graphic details of the physical suffering he caused don Lupe, or the psychological suffering he caused to his offspring, does Juvencio experience any pangs of conscience or any concern for his victim's family. He calculates his debt in monetary terms—to be precise, in the cost of a bribe sufficiently generous to guarantee immunity: "Yo entonces calculé que con unos cien pesos quedaba arreglado todo" (106). When he describes don Lupe's wife's death soon after don Lupe's own, and the state of orphanhood in which their "dos muchachitos" are subsequently left, he views the events only in terms of the implications for his own continued freedom: "a los muchachitos se los llevaron lejos, donde unos parientes. Así que, por parte de ellos, no había que tener miedo" (106). Perhaps most revealing is the refrain Juvencio mentally rehearses while escorted to the military outpost where the Colonel awaits his arrival: "Yo nunca le he hecho daño a nadie" (108). Only once the reader knows the cruelty with which Juvencio murdered don Lupe (a detail that emerges toward the end of the story) does the audacity of this statement fully emerge together with the strangeness of Juvencio's expectation that its utterance should have any effect.

The conditions of don Lupe's murder emerge in the story's penultimate scene and seem to secure the representation of Juvencio as unredeemable. Juvencio has been brought before the military officer who has ordered his detention, Colonel Terreros, who is don Lupe's son. In a powerful monologue, the Colonel recounts the hardship of growing up without a father, then provides graphic details of don Lupe's murder: "lo habían matado a machetazos, clavándole después una pica de buey en el estómago. Me contaron que duró más de dos días perdido y que, cuando lo encontraron, tirado en un arroyo, todavía estaba agonizando y pidiendo el encargo de que le cuidaran a su familia" (110). However, nothing the Colonel says prompts Juvencio to acknowledge the wrong

he has done. No sooner does the Colonel evoke the image of don Lupe's mutilated body than Juvencio seeks to replace it with that of his own decrepit form. He begs the colonel to look at *him*, to take in the years of privation written on his face and body and to release him out of pity: "¡Mírame, coronel! —pidió él—. Ya no valgo nada. No tardaré en morirme solito, derrengado de viejo. ¡No me mates...!" (110). Juvencio's perspectival intransigence at this climactic moment—his refusal to listen to and hear the Colonel in any meaningful way or to see the consequences of his acts through the Colonel's eyes—seems to clinch the case against Juvencio.

Interpreting the "Cultural Code": A Pro-Juvencio Reading

In all the ways outlined above, ranging from representation of his neglect of his nearest of kin to his coldblooded murder of a *compadre*, Rulfo's text constructs Juvencio as a despicable character. At the same time, however, the text suggests that there is a compelling case to be made for Juvencio and against his neighbor. But this pro-Juvencio reading is only evident to the reader who is conversant in what Barthes terms the "cultural code" of the literary text, one of the five textual codes he teases out in *S/Z*, which together create meaning and shape textual interpretation (20). Barthes defines the cultural code as "references to a science or a body of knowledge" that explain or provide insight into aspects of the literary text (20). In order to access a reading of "Diles" that is sympathetic to Juvencio, the reader needs to have a grasp of a very specific aspect of the relevant cultural code: the weight of the terms "novillo" (or bull) and "compadrazgo" in the rural Mexican context. The reader with the cultural competence to recognize and unpack the significance of these dense signifiers would have access to a pro-Juvencio reading largely unavailable to the reader without this cultural attunement, especially because the terms are neither flagged in the story as loaded, nor unpacked for the cultural outsider.

Though, as mentioned above, the narratee addressed in "¡Diles que no me maten!" has few identifiable characteristics, the lack of context provided by the narrator (and Juvencio) about the precise significance of *novillo* and *compadrazgo* seems to imply that the narratee does not need this clarification because he is familiar with the cultural context in which the events unfold. The real reader, of course, might understand what is at stake reading about Juvencio's loss of a bull at the hand of his *compadre*, or might not. This is a risk that Rulfo appears willing to take, which we might relate back to his interest in open-endedness and ambiguity. Of course, it might also be seen to point to the extraneousness of this extra layer of knowledge, as even the reader armed with the cultural knowledge to understand every nuance of the neighbors' conflict finds herself struggling with the act of judgment.

The reader who is attuned to the cultural code will pick up on details of the text that help explain Juvencio's extreme actions and seemingly odd decisions. These actions and decisions are determined, in many cases, by Juvencio's deep connection to his farm, both the land he cultivates and the animals he raises. Further, Juvencio's protectiveness toward his farm is connected to his devotion to his family, which depends on the farm for sustenance. Critic Antonio Alatorre suggests that slower, more careful readings of "Diles" allow readers to pick up on and be "moved by" Juvencio's "pristino y elemental

amor a la tierra” (4). Barthes allows us to add here that it is not necessarily slower readings that allow this positive picture of Juvencio to emerge, but those carried out by readers conversant in the story’s cultural code. Rulfo expresses this facet of Juvencio’s character in a pair of sensorily evocative sentences, which communicate his deep relationship to the land: “Sesenta años de vivir sobre [la tierra], de encerrarla entre sus manos, de haberla probado como se prueba el sabor de la carne. Se vino largo rato desmenuzándola con los ojos, saboreando cada pedazo como si fuera el último” (108). Through this description, Rulfo complicates a characterization of Juvencio that reduces him to his role in don Lupe’s murder. He suggests that Juvencio is more complex than we might have imagined.

Further insight into the values that drive Juvencio emerges from an odd detail in the story: Juvencio had the opportunity to hide from the men sent by the Colonel to detain him. He states clearly that he saw them with time enough to flee, just as he had fled hundreds of times before from (real or perceived) threats. Yet, in this case, Juvencio chose to approach the strangers who appear on his land in order to request that they not tread over his recently sown crops. He goes on to note that his actions were in vain because “la milpa no se lograría de ningún modo” due to the continuing drought conditions (108). This reflection raises the question of why Juvencio, after taking extreme measures to escape his pursuers for decades, would risk exposing himself for a cause he himself admits is futile. We might interpret Juvencio, tired of privation, as consciously deciding to turn himself in. It is equally possible, however, to read in his actions an essential attitude of protectiveness toward the *milpa*, a tenderness toward life in its most vulnerable, essential, and, perhaps, uncomplicated form: shoots sprouting from the ground. In this reading, Juvencio deflects the care we might expect him to have for his son onto the earth and *its* offspring, an attitude detectable in the anthropomorphizing fashion in which describes the “milpa tierna,” which “estaba comenzando a crecer” (108). Juvencio’s relationship to the *milpa*, together with his “pristino y elemental amor a la tierra,” helps explain why he would consider murdering his neighbor as fair retribution for slaughter of his young bull. If he is willing to risk his life in order to protect young crops that are doomed to dry out, we can see him murdering in order to avenge the killing of his bull.

In an article on “Diles,” critic Pablo García asks readers to rethink the perceived value of animal *and* human life from within the cultural context of rural Mexico. He suggests, “La venganza de [Juvencio] Nava por la muerte del novillo pone en evidencia dos aspectos que caracterizan la realidad que describe el texto. Por un lado, el mucho valor de un novillo para el que vive de ellos y por otro lado, el poco valor de la vida de un hombre en una sociedad regida por la violencia” (43-44). García suggests that don Lupe’s violent act and Juvencio’s might not be as incommensurate as the reader (not from rural Mexico) might at first think. This idea is corroborated by what might be considered a companion story to “¡Diles que no me maten!” from *El llano en llamas*, “Es que somos muy pobres,” which narrates the inevitable “perdición” of a young girl due to the loss of her sole valuable possession: a cow (56). Lacking the cow as a dowry, and thus the possibility of attracting a suitable husband, Tacha’s parents project she is doomed to a life of prostitution. In the poor, rural communities represented in Rulfo’s stories, the loss of a cow is a serious matter. We can imagine that the stakes are magnified for a young bull—the potential father of a whole next generation of calves,

who in turn will provide for the next generation of his family. In this way, Juvencio's protectiveness of his livestock might be read as protectiveness of and care for his family and its future.

There is a final question of cultural context that should inform the reader's judgment of right and wrong: the nature of don Lupe and Juvencio's relationship. The narrator, his voice shot through with Juvencio's by way of Rulfo's use of free indirect discourse, presents their relationship thus: "Don Lupe Terreros, el dueño de la Puerta de Piedra, por más señas su compadre. Al que él, Juvencio Nava, tuvo que matar por eso; por ser el dueño de la Puerta de Piedra y que, siendo también su compadre, le negó pasto para sus animales" (105). More than neighbors, the two men are *compadres*.

Compadrazgo is an important institution across Latin America, with origins in the baptismal rites of the Catholic Church. According to church tradition, the parents of a child who is to be baptized ask another couple to become the child's *padrinos*, or godparents. Through participation in this ceremony, the two sets of parents become *compadres*, literally "co-parents." According to the traditions that attend this form of ritual kinship in Latin America, *compadres* are bound to provide one another with spiritual, emotional, and economic support to a degree that "blood brothers" would be challenged to match (Foster 9). In other words, *compadrazgo* makes greater demands on its participants than the bonds of biological kinship. We can trace this distinction back to the term *compadre* itself, which implies that godparents are to look upon their godchildren *as if* they were their own. It is, in this sense, a perspectival commitment.

It is common for parents to seek this bond with a family of greater social standing; in this sense, *compadrazgo* functions as a de facto safety net providing security to poor families in societies where the division of wealth is uneven. Rulfo does not specify whether don Lupe is godfather to Juvencio's children, or Juvencio to don Lupe's, or whether in fact both men are godfathers to each other's children. Patterns of Latin American *compadrazgo*, however, lead us to believe that the former is true: because don Lupe is of superior social and economic standing—Juvencio speaks to him formally as "Usted," whereas don Lupe addresses Juvencio using "tú", in addition, don Lupe owns farmlands better able to withstand a drought, perhaps located more advantageously with respect to water—it is more likely that he is Justino's godfather than that Juvencio is the colonel's.

Taking all these factors into consideration, we can see don Lupe's denial of his pastures to Juvencio, a *compadre* whose cattle are on the verge of starvation, as a breach of an important social contract, endangering not just the cattle's welfare, but that of Juvencio and his children. Don Lupe, of course, goes even one step further than denial: he actively injures Juvencio and his family by killing his cow—a tremendous violation of the expectations among ritual kin, especially when we consider the potential effects on the godchildren don Lupe is charged with protecting. This act resonates with the same perspectival rigidity we see in almost every character in the story, even though as godfather don Lupe has made an explicit commitment to care for Juvencio's children as if they were his own.

The struggle over the fence separating the two men's properties—Juvencio opens the fence under the cover of night and don Lupe patches it during the day—can be read as

a symbolic representation of the breach of *compadrazgo*.⁴³ When Juvencio opens a hole in don Lupe's fence, he turns an ostensibly neutral marker of property rights into a physical representation of don Lupe's violation of his responsibilities as *compadre*. More generally, the hole in the fence that Juvencio persists in creating represents a lesion that persists in Mexican society: the gaping hole between rich and poor, largely caused by the unequal distribution of land that puts Juvencio in a relationship of dependence with his neighbor. Rulfo's use of the verbs "abrir" and "tapar" to describe the neighbors' actions underscores this reading. Juvencio insists, under the cover of night, on "opening" and "reopening" the hole—or we might say, wound: "de noche se volvía a abrir [el agujero]" (105). Don Lupe does not "mend" or "fix" the whole (*remendar, arreglar, reparar, componer, recomponer*), but rather "covers it up" ("se tapaba el agujero"). With "tapar," Rulfo emphasizes that don Lupe's act is one of concealment. He seeks to hide the injustice that the broken fence symbolizes. Don Lupe's daily, mechanical "covering up" of the hole is symbolic of his refusal to "fix" or "mend" the injustice of Juvencio's vulnerability as contrasted with his own prosperity, even though he has committed himself, through *compadrazgo*, to provide this kind of "fix" in the case that Juvencio's family should experience acute need.

This sympathetic perspective on Juvencio is only available to the reader who has insight into the fragility of the material conditions in which Juvencio's family lives, and the importance of *compadrazgo* as a safety net within this context. Even the reader who is sensitive to the cultural and socio-political context that surrounds and propels the violence in the story is likely herself foreign to this milieu. Thus, a reading sympathetic to Juvencio depends on the reader's agreement to align her own perspective with Juvencio's, to see the world through his eyes. Ironically, through this act, the reader commits herself to the very perspectival flexibility that characters in the story so ardently refuse. As such, the reader's willingness to attempt to understand Juvencio's point-of-view reveals, in its very act, the impossibility of ever completely understanding his perspectival rigidity. In this way, Rulfo constructs Juvencio and don Lupe as characters who are always Other—especially to the reader who most willingly submits to their alterity. Rulfo's story thus represents the limits of the most capacious empathy.

Beyond Mimesis: Rulfo and Unnatural Narratology

As we have seen, "¡Diles que no me maten!" is about the relationship between fathers and sons, between neighbors and *compadres*, and between Mexicans and the law (or, perhaps better said, lawlessness). But it is also very much about more literary forms of relationship: those between characters and narrators, characters and narratees, and, by

⁴³ Fences constitute a ubiquitous motif in Latin American regionalist literature. In *Garduña* (Puerto Rico, 1896), *Dóña Bárbara* (Venezuela, 1929), *El mundo es ancho y ajeno* (Peru, 1941), and Rulfo's own *Pedro Páramo* (México, 1955)—among others—fences represent this unjust expropriation of land, resulting in the dependence of regional populations on exploitative landowners, in some cases through the hacienda system, in others through tenant farming. In "Diles que no me maten" we witness an admittedly less dramatic situation. Juvencio is not landless and his relationship with don Lupe appears to have been somewhat convivial prior to their conflict. Nevertheless, the fence in this story summons the unjustly erected fences throughout regionalist prose fiction, which function as symbols of the continuation of the colonial project under the cover of republican law.

extension, characters and readers. Rulfo draws attention to this layer of self-reflexivity approximately one-third of the way through the text. Up until this point, the reader has been led to believe that “Diles” features what Gérard Genette terms a heterodiegetic narrator, that is, a “narrator absent from the story he tells” (245). In line with what Genette describes as the “absolute” absence of the heterodiegetic narrator, we have assumed that Juvencio is unaware of the fact or nature of the third-person narrator’s account of his actions and thoughts (245). As it turns out, however, Juvencio is present to the narration, a fact suggested by his seizure of narrative control just as the narrator approaches the (incriminating) climax of the story: the moment at which he murders don Lupe. At this point in the narrative, Juvencio takes charge, suppressing this event and replacing it with stories of his own suffering as he takes to the mountains, running from the law.

Rulfo signals Juvencio’s wresting of narrative power from the first narrator with a break in the text. Before the break, Juvencio is a character participating in what Seymour Chatman refers to as the “content plane,” or the text’s “story”; after the break, he becomes an active contributor to its “expression plane,” its “discourse” (146):

Y [Juvencio] y don Lupe alegaban y volvían a alegar sin llegar a ponerse de acuerdo.

Hasta que una vez don Lupe le dijo:

—Mira, Juvencio, otro animal más que metas al potrero y te lo mato.

Y él contestó:

—Mire, don Lupe, yo no tengo la culpa de que los animales busquen su acomodo. Ellos son inocentes. Ahi se lo haiga si me los mata.

«Y me mató un novillo.

»Esto pasó hace treinta y cinco años, por marzo, porque ya en abril andaba yo en el monte, corriendo del exhorto. (106)

Technically speaking, the narratee has been present from the story’s inception. As Gerald Prince writes, “All narration . . . presupposes not only (at least) one narrator but also (at least) one narratee, the narratee being someone whom the narrator addresses” (“Introduction” 214). At this moment in the story, however, Juvencio’s attempt to steer the narrative away from incriminating details constructs the narratee as an active, important player in the story, one whose judgments matter to Juvencio. As narrator, Juvencio dwells on the hardships he suffered while living off of wild plants and sleeping in the open. “Eso duró toda la vida,” he insists. “No fue un año ni dos. Fue toda la vida” (107). The first-person account is rhetoric, born of the desire to sway the sympathies of the narratee.

A related intervention can be observed in the opening chapters to Arguedas’s *Yawar Fiesta* (1941), where a voice breaks into the third-person narrator’s discourse in order to punctuate his description of the town and its history with their commentary and opinions.⁴⁴ For example, after the narrator describes the physical appearance of two of the *ayllus*, or indigenous communities, in Puquio, he is interrupted by the words “¡Pueblo

⁴⁴ For a more detailed analysis of this aspect of *Yawar Fiesta*, see Chapter One.

indio!” (9). No speaker is identified, but through repeated encounter with this kind of intervention throughout the opening chapter, the reader comes to understand that Arguedas represents in this fashion the voice of a collectivity. This particular outburst is compelling because the reader can attribute it to two different groups—the *ayllu* Indians, who would exclaim “pueblo indio” with pride, and the visitors to Puquio, who speak the phrase—we learn on the novel’s opening page—“con desprecio” (7). It is, in Bakhtinian terms, internally dialogized—fraught with the very tension between insiders and outsiders that will constitute the novel’s central conflict. Juvencio’s plunge through the fourth wall in Rulfo’s story, however, is much more jarring. It comes at one of the story’s moments of highest tension, after the story’s narrative style has been defined for the reader, rather than, as in Arguedas’s text, in the course of an introductory chapter, which takes as one of its purposes easing the reader into the novel’s innovative narration. In addition, because it is the action of a named individual rather than a collectivity, in the midst of a mimetic scene, not a diegetic one, the narrative stakes are much higher in the case of Juvencio’s interruption.⁴⁵

The interpretation I put forth here of “¡Diles que no me maten!”—whereby Juvencio is aware of the narrator and has the power to (at least temporarily) overpower him—constitutes a radical departure from past interpretations of this story. Nevertheless, there does exist a precedent for this kind of interpretation both within criticism on Rulfo and within narrative studies writ large. In “Ambigüedad y justicia en *El llano en llamas* de Juan Rulfo,” Víctor Goldgel Carballo identifies a moment in Rulfo’s story “El hombre” in which a character mysteriously responds to a third-person narrator’s description in order to clarify an ambiguity. Goldgel describes this mimetic lapse as throwing into question the agency and status of (Rulfo’s) literary characters: “La intervención del hombre . . . es una respuesta al discurso del narrador. Al formularla, el hombre a la vez niega su condición de personaje—se trata de un sujeto que puede volver la cabeza hacia el narrador autor para dirigirle la palabra—y la afirma—el personaje no es más que un dispositivo literario” (314). To add to Goldgel’s analysis, we might consider how the story’s title, “El hombre,” subtly plants this question from the beginning: is the story about “el hombre” (the man) or “el personaje” (the character)—and how can fiction acknowledge and address the difference between these two figures, its ultimate (in some ways insufficient, in some ways liberating) status *as representation*? Goldgel interprets this unsettling textual moment as revealing “el abismo que se abre entre las voces cuando éstas, como por lo general sucede, no entran en diálogo entre sí. Un abismo que, por ser tanto insalvable como planificado, afirma y a la vez niega la pluralidad radical de las voces” (314). It should not surprise us that Rulfo, whose fiction is about social hierarchies and the violence through which these hierarchies are established and maintained, should embed in his work reflections on, and resistance to, the hierarchies native to realist fiction. The struggle with seemingly unassailable

⁴⁵ Another twentieth-century novel that uses a technique similar to this one is William Faulkner’s *The Hamlet* (1940), in which V.K. Ratliff sometimes responds spontaneously to the narrator’s discourse through direct speech. Though Rulfo denied reading Faulkner prior to writing *El llano en llamas* and *Pedro Páramo*, critics have questioned this fact. Putting aside the question of direct influence, interaction between heterodiegetic narrators and characters (in modernist literature and beyond) appears to be a rich site for further study and would be facilitated by the tools of unnatural narratology.

authorities and conventions spills out from the social world and into the literary one in his prose fiction through characters' interrogation of the narrator's authority.

Rulfo's most dramatic and prominent experimentation with narrator, character, and narratee comes in his novel *Pedro Páramo*. Though for the first half of the novel we are unaware of the site of enunciation of protagonist Juan Preciado's narration, in a wholly unexpected moment of revelation at the beginning of Fragment 36—almost a full halfway through the novel's 69 sections—we learn he has been speaking from the grave. What is more, in a compelling and almost inscrutable twist, Rulfo reveals that far from engaging in a monologic, solitary recounting of his life experiences, Juan Preciado speaks to Dorotea, who dies at the same time as Juan Preciado and shares his coffin. Critic Carol Clark D'Lugo writes that in the novel's first half, "Readers are brought into the fiction by a first-person narrator [Juan Preciado] who . . . feeds the readers' narrative assumptions by seeming to direct his tale to them" (73). When they learn he has been speaking directly to Dorotea, their affective relationship to the narrator and the storyline shift: "Readers have been repositioned from their status as receivers of story; they have been decentered" (77). The readerly experience here is the inverse of that provided by "¡Diles que no me maten!". Juvencio's appeal to the narratee—and by extension, to the reader—centers the narratee/reader within the story. In this way, Rulfo plays with the effects—both affective and thematic—of transgressing the boundaries that traditionally separate characters from third-person narrators, characters from narratees, and readers from the participants and actors of the storyworld.

Critics have long described Rulfo's work as anti-mimetic, celebrating the spectacular breach of realism Rulfo pioneers when setting *Pedro Páramo* under the earth, amidst the restless corpses buried in Comala's graveyard. But critics have been less forthcoming in recognizing the importance of the kind of anti-mimeticism that I trace above, a kind that engages the "autonomy" and "specificity"—to borrow from Genette—of the narrating instance by suggesting unexpected and purportedly impossible interactions between characters, narrators, and narratees. Admittedly, they are easy to miss, but even when they are identified by narratologically-minded critics, as we will see in my discussion of Terry Peavler's work below, these mimetic lapses tend to be described as artistic errors.

The tendency to minimize or overlook inexplicable narrative moments is common not only in criticism on this story in particular, or Rulfo's oeuvre in general, but across literary criticism—or so adherents to unnatural narratology, a recent subfield of narrative studies, argue. Unnatural narratologists call attention to how narrative studies have "focus[ed] far too extensively on the idea that narratives are modeled on the actual world" and as a result of this "clear mimetic bias" given short shrift to anti-mimetic elements of narrative (Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, Richardson 114). In *Unnatural Voices*, a study of anti-mimetic narrators, Brian Richardson characterizes the baseline understanding of narrative as "someone relating a set of events to someone else," but argues that "this entire way of looking at narrative has to be reconsidered in the light of the numerous ways innovative authors problematize each term of this formula" (5). Among the many innovations on this basic—or "natural"—formula he outlines in his Introduction, Richardson notes that "basic categories" such as "homo- and heterodiegesis . . . are repeatedly problematized and violated by experimental writers," as we have seen in Rulfo's work (13-14). In this way, we can describe Rulfo as belonging to what

Richardson terms a “neglected twentieth-century tradition of non- and anti-mimetic fiction” (14).

Unnatural narratologists’ work complements the work of theorists of self-conscious fiction, but ultimately serves a different purpose. Rather than identifying and theorizing a particular literary-historical movement, unnatural narratologists seek to draw attention to the prevalence of unnatural, or anti-mimetic, features throughout all prose fiction. On their view, these elements of fiction have been mischaracterized, overlooked, or treated reductively by narrative studies because of a foundational—yet problematic—assumption that the functioning of narrative worlds mimics the real world. In this way, unnatural narratology has significant resonance with the project of my dissertation: showing how prior critics have passed over, simplified, and even dismissed as aesthetic liabilities crucial formal elements of Latin American fiction. While in the case of José María Arguedas, as we saw in Chapters One and Two, this has been because of the novelty or subtlety of these voices narrative moves, in Rulfo’s case this inattention has inhered in the “unnatural” character—the anti-mimeticism—of his fiction.

Unnatural narratology’s critique of the mimetic bias of narrative studies offers a compelling explanation for narrative studies’ undertheorization of the narrating instance as observed by Genette in *Narrative Discourse*. The narrating instance constitutes—in many texts—a highly anti-mimetic layer of the work: a narratee (or group of narratees) listen to a narrator (or narrators) relate a story, often at considerable length, often without making interjections of any kind, or without their interjections becoming audible. This layer of literary representation does not easily find its correspondence in the real world. In an ironic way, we might see Rulfo’s decision to place Juan Preciado in a double coffin with Dorotea as a way of finding a “realistic” setting for fictional narration. Ghosts make the most likely narrators and narratees, armed with the stories of their lives—complete with beginnings, middles, and ends—to recount and limitless time to narrate and listen.

We can observe classical narratology’s mimetic bias in the scholarship on Rulfo. Critic Terry Peavler is, so far as my research has allowed me to see, alone in asserting that the narratee is a significant figure in Rulfo’s fiction, whose presence and activity (even when this activity is implied and not explicitly stated) are crucial to interpretations of his work. While Peavler insists on the importance of the narratee’s presence and function in Rulfo’s stories, he makes clear that, in order to function properly, a narrative situation must be credible—it must reflect a set of circumstances that could be replicated in the real world (22). For this reason, he finds two stories from *El llano en llamas*, “Nos han dado la tierra” and “Es que somos muy pobres,” to be marred “hasta cierto punto ... de la misma imprecisión”—the former because it is narrated in the present tense, representing an “impossible” narrative situation, and the latter because (among other details) the narrator provides the narratee with information that would be unnecessary and redundant if the narratee were present, such as his comment that Tacha is sitting beside him on the riverbank (22). Peavler characterizes these stories as lacking “una situación narracional bien establecida,” thus resulting in “cierta inquietud por parte del lector,” an affective response that for Peavler detracts from the story’s literary value (22-23). In this way, Peavler creates a hierarchy of Rulfo’s works based on the presence or absence of mimeticism, confirming the unnatural narratologists’ hypothesis about the mimetic bias of narrative studies. Though never explicitly theorized in his text, Peavler’s “situación narracional bien establecida” seems to be one that follows the rules of the world in which

we live, including rules of time, space, and human cognitive abilities. Through his word choice, Peavler suggests that narratives that do not follow these rules are ‘poorly established’—that is, somehow technically deficient. According to this reading, the mimetic lapses Peavler finds throughout Rulfo’s fiction constitute poor narrative craftsmanship.

Unnatural narratology argues that anti-mimetic textual moments should be approached as intentional interventions, whose presence should impact our interpretation of the text: “the study of unnatural narrative seeks to describe the ways in which projected storyworlds deviate from real-world frames, and, in a second step, it then tries to interpret these ‘deviations’” (Alber, Iversen, Nielsen, Richardson 116). Though he does not make explicit use of unnatural narratology as a theoretical framework, Goldgel effectively does this when he interprets the fleeting, ostensibly “impossible” contact between character and narrator in “El hombre” as a device meant to draw attention to how the structures of fiction both make possible *and* undermine “la pluralidad radical de las voces” Rulfo reaches for in his fiction as a response to the Mexican Revolution’s failed attempts at pluralism (314). Likewise, Juvencio’s forceful address of the narratee in “¡Diles que no me maten!” underscores, at a crucial moment in the text, the active role the listener/reader must play in interacting with the narrative that follows. In a way that is prefigured in the story’s imploring title, Juvencio’s direct address of the narratee—who functions as the reader’s stand-in in the text—constructs her as a judge in the conflict between Juvencio and don Lupe, and presses the narratee (and by extension the reader) to wrestle with the seemingly equally weighted arguments on each side in order to move past ambiguity to decision.

Judgment and Justice: The Role of Perspective

The final two sections of “¡Diles que no me maten!” deal directly with the act of judgment and questions of justice, offering important guidance to the reader in how she should approach the task with which she has been charged. In the story’s penultimate scene, Juvencio is brought before Colonel Terreros, don Lupe’s son, who condemns Juvencio to death. The final scene takes place after Juvencio’s execution. Justino, Juvencio’s son, collects Juvencio’s remains and prepares to transport them home for burial. Colonel Terreros and Justino—the sons of the two men involved in the original conflict—approach the issue of judgment in diametrically opposed fashions, offering two distinct models of response to the cycle of violence and revenge set into motion by their fathers. Colonel Terreros, in the thrall of the law of revenge, inherits the older generation’s perspectival intransigence and perpetuates the cycle of violence by ordering Juvencio’s execution. Justino, in contrast, whose name evokes “justicia” (justice), exhibits a propensity for multiperspectivalism. Through subtle interior views, the reader detects within him an equanimity that sets him apart from the other men in the story. This, together with his name, suggest that through the character of Justino, Rulfo—in a rare moment of optimism—suggests a possible route of escape from the violence that

permeates the society he depicts.⁴⁶ At the same time, there is something troublesome about Justino, who matches Colonel Terreros's smoldering fury with an almost chilly detachment. Though Justino's ability to disengage from the law of revenge is an important step away from violence, Rulfo signals the ultimate inadequacy of his approach through the passive role he plays throughout the story. He is unable to change anything and is left to clean up in the wake of the violent clash between his father and Colonel Terreros: the story concludes with him transporting his father's desecrated remains back to his ranch for burial. In this way, Rulfo's story shows us both the potential and the possible limitations of multiperspectivalism: it is a precursor to disinterested judgment, but it must represent a penultimate (not ultimate) step in the pursuit of justice. Rulfo underscores the importance of being able to move beyond the multiperspectival stance—the surveying of multiple perspectives in a conflict—to committed action in a particular direction.

Rulfo thematizes perspectival intransigence in the scene of judgment in which Colonel Terreros orders Juvencio's execution. A soldier brings Juvencio to the doorway of the building where Colonel Terreros awaits him. Though as Colonel he holds a position of authority, his "court" is unofficial (he is a military official, not a judge) and the proceedings highly unorthodox. Juvencio stands, hat in hand, waiting for the Colonel to emerge, but this never happens. The Colonel stays inside, neither casting his eyes upon Juvencio nor addressing him directly. Rather, he speaks to the sergeant who accompanies Juvencio, who then repeats the Colonel's words as if Juvencio cannot hear them himself:

—Pregúntale que si conoció a Guadalupe Terreros.
—Que dizque si conociste a Guadalupe Terreros.
—¿A don Lupe? Sí. Dile que sí lo conocí. Ya murió. (109)

The scene continues in this fashion, with Colonel Terreros neither looking at nor directly speaking to Juvencio. The rhetorical power of all he says—which contrasts sharply with Juvencio's ineptitude as a self-advocate—gives the reader the sense that he has rehearsed his words more than once in anticipation of Juvencio's capture. His language is literary, moving with agility between short, declarative sentences and poignant metaphor:

"Guadalupe Terreros era mi padre. Cuando crecí y lo busqué me dijeron que estaba muerto. Es algo difícil crecer sabiendo que la cosa de donde podemos agarrarnos para enraizar está muerta. Con nosotros, eso pasó" (110). The opening sentence, "Guadalupe Terreros era mi padre," brings to mind Justino's begrudging admission in the story's opening scene, "según eso, yo soy tu hijo" (104). In a story full of corrupted, damaged human relationships, the Colonel gives voice to a positive father-son relationship. This opening sentence communicates the human tenderness that the rest of the story has been lacking. Of course, the relationship is not real, but the idealized fantasy of an orphan.

By figuring the colonel's voice as a disembodied, omnipotent essence, drifting ominously out from the darkness, Rulfo multiplies its possible meanings. Prominent among these is the voice as a representation of Juvencio's own conscience, unwilling to

⁴⁶ This is in contrast to the use of the name Justo for the cattle rancher in another "En la madrugada," who is involved in an abusive, incestuous relationship with his niece. In "Diles," Rulfo appears not to use the name to such ironic effect.

allow him to forget his heinous act. The colonel's speech, with its vivid evocation of the very image Juvencio suppresses earlier in the text, might be seen as the return of the repressed. In Rulfo's uniperspectival world, however, this return has no effect. Nothing the Colonel says prompts Juvencio to acknowledge the wrong he has done. As we have seen, his response to the Colonel's graphic description of his don Lupe's murder is to ask the Colonel to observe his own state of physical disintegration. But the colonel matches Juvencio's perspectival intransigence—his refusal to see don Lupe's murder through the eyes of his orphaned children—with his own. He simply repeats his order that Juvencio be taken away and shot, his only concession being that Juvencio be given “algo de beber hasta que se emborrache para que no le duelen los tiros” (110).⁴⁷

Colonel Terreros refuses to look at Juvencio directly, we can assume, largely in order to prevent the softening of his resolve to execute his father's murderer. He wants to see Juvencio only as the man who murdered his father and avoids contact with him in order to maintain this perspective. Juvencio's son Justino, in contrast, demonstrates an odd inclination to only view events from the subject position of others. In this story about characters with strongly held, and irreconcilable, views, for which they are willing to kill, Justino's equanimity sets him apart. Critic Pablo García describes this quality as “objetividad,” but it is more than this (38). Even on the one issue on which he takes a stand—refusing to advocate on his father's behalf to the Colonel—he ultimately relents and does his father's bidding (overlooking this detail, García describes him as “imposible” before his father's pleas) (38). While we are very clear on where Juvencio, don Lupe, and Colonel Terreros stand with respect to the story's central conflict, we are never allowed access, as readers, to Justino's point of view. While at first we might attribute this to the perspectival quirks of Rulfo's storytelling, by story's end we conclude that Justino seems, like Keats's poet, to possess the gift of negative capability: the ability to be “everything and nothing,” to have “no self” (Keats 336). It is unclear whether this is a symptom of his nonviolent nature or its source.

We first see this quality in Justino in the story's opening scene, when his first thought upon considering seeking an audience with the Colonel to advocate for his father's life is to think how it will affect his wife and eight children. Justino repeats this practice in the story's final section, as he exercises a kind of ventriloquized vision. The scene recounts how Justino prepares his father's corpse for transport back to Palo de Venado, Justino's ranch. As he ties his father's body to his saddle, he imagines the disgust his father's dead visage would inspire in passersby and decides to tie secure a sack around his head “para que no diera mala impresión” (111). This is the first reference to Juvencio's mutilated face and yet Justino betrays no personal reaction to it; rather, he worries about its effect on fellow travelers on the road.

Our second, and last, view of Juvencio's face is also ventriloquized. As he initiates his journey home, Justino sees his father's mutilated face in his mind's eye, but still not from his own perspective: “Tu nuera y los nietos te extrañarán—iba diciéndole—

⁴⁷ Through this gesture, the colonel appears to assert his moral superiority over Juvencio, who ensured maximum suffering when he took don Lupe's life. This moral authority is undermined, however, by the fashion in which Juvencio is executed. Rulfo reveals the mutilated state of Juvencio's corpse in the story's final sentence, when Justino, preparing the body for transport back to his ranch, remarks that his wife and children will not recognize “esa cara tan llena de boquetes por tanto tiro de gracia como te dieron” (111). The Colonel's soldiers carry out the ultimate act of disrespect: the desecration of human remains.

. Te mirarán a la cara y creerán que no eres tú. Se les afigurará que te ha comido el coyote, cuando te vean con esa cara tan llena de boquetes por tanto tiro de gracia que te dieron” (111). Justino considers that, unable to imagine that such ferocity could be unleashed on one human being by another, his wife and children would explain the state of Juvencio’s face to themselves by postulating an attack by a wild animal. This innocent gaze, available to Justino through his act of imagination, is at once painfully deluded and bracingly clarifying. It reveals the inhumanity of the actions taken by the Colonel and his soldiers. Rulfo makes clear, however, that this innocence has little value in the society represented in the story. Childhood is a phase that passes quickly, as Rulfo illustrates through his representation of Colonel Terreros. When we first encounter the Colonel in the story, he is nothing more than one of the unnamed “dos muchachitos todavía de a gatas” left behind by the murdered don Lupe. A handful of paragraphs later, the crawling babe reappears in the shape of the vengeful, merciless Colonel. Through this portrayal of the Colonel’s transformation, Rulfo suggests that in the world he depicts, youthful innocence, including a rejection of savage violence, has little potential for survival. It is possible that, despite their father’s pacifism, Justino’s own children might be initiated into the culture of violence so unfathomable to them in their youth. At the same time, Rulfo suggests through the figure of Justino that cultivating a multiperspectival outlook that allows one to remain outside of the culture of violence has little agency in a society so riven by violence.

Conclusions: From Ambiguity to Commitment

Justino’s perspectival fluidity would appear to be the preferable model of judgment offered in the story, and yet, when we consider his role in the story, we are compelled to question its value. Justino is helpless to intervene as the Colonel’s takes justice into his own hands and “tries” Juvencio in his makeshift court. Justino’s primary role consists of transporting his father’s remains in the aftermath of all the action. If Justino has the poet’s gift, he also has his curse: living life on the margins of action, thinking, figuring, interpreting and seeing, but, in negation of Shelley’s dictum, having no grounds to legislate. Perspectival fluidity, for Justino, seems to lead to an indeterminacy that renders him helpless to intervene, even when injustice is being done.

In a compelling way, Justino’s practice of holding himself apart from the violence that permeates society resonates with what critic Geoffrey Galt Harpham identifies as the problematic, noncommittal stance of the contemporary thinker and thus renders him vulnerable to Harpham’s critique:

In various ways, contemporary thinkers try to preserve their self-righteousness intact by remaining on the margins, in the uncritiquable position of critique, avoiding the disorder and equivocality that attend worldly agency. We must, I urge here, understand the desire for purity, consistency, and perfect validation as a species of potentially culpable passivity. Genuinely responsible thought entails more than mounting an effective and rigorous critique of something; it means ‘imagining the

center,' placing oneself in the position, both powerful and vulnerable, of the lawgiver, the policy maker, the judge, the executive. (xiii)

Harpham deals specifically with the relationship between intellectuals and violence, arguing that contemporary thinkers live in “a world in which principles must occasionally be enforced by force, a world that sometimes demands to know the answers to such questions as: whose side are you on? what must be done? which action is best? which principles and whose rights should prevail? and, who are you?” (261). He urges them toward a kind of pragmatism that acknowledges “the true difficulty of decision” by not merely standing aside, letting worldly powers act, and lamenting the course they take, but being willing to “live in the shadows” by acting in favor of the better decision, even when it means compromise and impurity (261, 260). This decision for “responsible action” (not action beyond reproach, but rather the action that represents the best of available alternatives) is what Harpham identifies as the heart of ethics (261).

And, I argue, it is a related task Rulfo assigns readers in their encounter with “¡Diles que no me maten!”. Critics have celebrated Rulfo’s ambiguity. In “¿Qué es la crítica literaria?”—an essay that investigates the process and purpose of criticism itself—Antonio Alatorre identifies Rulfo’s achievement in “¡Diles que no me maten!” as creating a story that, in the course of multiple readings, becomes “mucho más complejo, mucho más ambiguo, mucho más rico” (4). Alatorre, along with other critics, expresses delight in Rulfo’s creation of an unsolvable narrative puzzle. Almost all of the accounts emphasize the dynamism of the story and the lively experience it offers the reader: our interpretations are turned on their heads as the characters shift before our eyes, with the sympathetic becoming despicable and vice versa. Pedro García writes of the three main characters, Juvencio, don Lupe, and the Colonel: “turno a turno son todos inocentes, son todos culpables” (37). The story offers a beguiling encounter with uncertainty and undecidability, which for some critics has not just an aesthetic but an ideological pay-off. For Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, for example, the proliferation of incommensurate viewpoints, and the subsequent impossibility of reconciling their individual experiences into a coherent, inclusive narrative or message, differentiates *El llano en llamas* from “la prosa narrativa mexicana anterior, ideológica, dogmática a veces, prosa que subrayaba, analizaba y explicaba” (“Realidad” 74). Blanco Aguinaga values the anti-authoritarian nature of Rulfo’s open-ended text.

To think that, as readers, we can stop here, savoring the countless layers of complexity Rulfo packs into “¡Diles que no me maten!”, however, is to ignore the ultimate task that is pressed upon the reader through the construction of the narratee as an active, judging presence. Our job, here and in analogous situations outside the borders of the text, is to experience uncertainty and yet opt for commitment to the best decision and action at our disposal.

Chapter Four

Heteroglossia in Latin American Fiction: Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*

Critics Ángel Rama and Roberto González Echevarría both theorize Mexican author Juan Rulfo's fiction as heteroglossic, that is, representing the interweaving of different social languages and discourses in politically significant ways. Ángel Rama does not use Mikhail Bakhtin's terminology in *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*, where he makes the case for Rulfo's (and other transculturators') importance for Latin American fiction, but his description of Rulfo's prose as a blend of the regional and the cosmopolitan, the traditional and the modern, the authentic and the aesthetic resonates strongly with Bakhtin notion of dialogized language, in which each utterance carries within it different social languages, representative of "specific points of view on the world" (Bakhtin 291). In *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (1990), González Echevarría uses Bakhtin specifically as a point of departure for developing his theory of "archival fictions." Following Bakhtin, he theorizes the post-1953 Latin American novel as defined by "[h]eterogeneity of cultures, languages, sources, beginnings" (175), and, more specifically, "containing all previous forms of Latin American narrative" (17).

Rama and González Echevarría, however, interpret what is in effect Rulfo's heteroglossia in diametrically opposed fashions. In Rama's anthropologically inflected theory, the rich blend of languages Rulfo creates through his fiction offers new possibilities for imagining alterity's flourishing within the structures of the modern nation state. Rama's proposal resonates with Bakhtin's suggestion that the novel does not just mimic the dialogism—or generative interaction of languages—already present in society, but itself creates new moments of juxtaposition, contradiction, and contestation. For González Echevarría, on the other hand, Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo*, like other archival fictions, does not create but rather negates languages. Archival fictions warehouse past forms of Latin American narrative and in doing so present them as "hollowed out, obsolete, extinct" (17). In short, for Rama the effect of Rulfo's heteroglossia is to revitalize, reproduce, and bring up-to-date Latin American culture, while for González Echevarría the effect is to reveal the emptiness at the center of all Latin American narratives.

In this chapter I analyze how Rama and González Echevarría arrive at such different interpretations of the political significance of Rulfo's heteroglossia in *Pedro Páramo*. I will argue that each critic addresses just one aspect of Rulfo's heteroglossia: Rama focuses principally on Rulfo's representation of "habla popular," the oral language of members of regional cultures, paying less attention to his engagement with Latin American lettered culture, while González Echevarría looks at Rulfo's weaving of different literary genres into his fiction without attention to the treatment of speaking subjects. I will seek to bring into clearer focus what Bakhtin characterizes as the "system" of languages that comprise the novel by interpreting the relationship between these two kinds of heteroglossia (262).⁴⁸ I will show how Rulfo's representation of Latin American literary languages might be seen as distanced, ironized, and "hollowed out" in

⁴⁸ All references to Bakhtin in this chapter refer to "Discourse in the Novel."

the fashion described by González Echevarría, while, as Rama suggests, his representation of a certain class of speaking subjects—highly marginalized figures—is not ironized, but conveyed in carefully wrought aesthetic forms whose careful crafting suggest they may “directly and unmediatedly express . . . the semantic and expressive intentions of the author” (Bakhtin 299). These two forms of representation, I will argue, are meant to play off of one another, with the predictability and conventionality of the former form bringing into greater relief the vibrancy of the new forms of mediation Rulfo pioneers.

Finally, I will focus on one of these new literary forms, the micro-portrait, to explore how it functions as narrative activism. Present throughout Rulfo’s work, the micro-portrait reveals, in a very small space, the interior life of a minor character who is a member of a socially marginalized group. In analyzing the micro-portrait, I follow Rama in theorizing Rulfo as engaged in the political act of foregrounding marginalized characters in his fiction, as well as framing them according to a new, more egalitarian set of terms. Different from Rama, however, my claims about these representations are strictly narrative. Rather than claiming that Rulfo communicates and preserves through these representations the essence of threatened regional cultures, I will address the way in which Rulfo, through the micro-portrait—a highly mediated, literary form—reorganizes the politics of space in the novel, drawing a new level and quality of readerly attention to minor characters and their plight. I will thus offer a third vision of how heteroglossia works in Rulfo’s novel, drawing partially on Rama and González Echevarría, but then homing in on how a specific formal intervention—the compact, layered form of the micro-portrait—deepens the novel’s dialogism.

Transculturation as Heteroglossia: Seeing Rama Through the Eyes of Bakhtin

Ángel Rama’s account of “transcultured narrative” resembles what Bakhtin describes as heteroglossia. Though Rama does not use Bakhtin’s terminology or make direct reference to Bakhtin’s theory in *Transculturación narrativa*, Rama’s vision of the novel as enabling and mediating the contact of distinct social languages is highly reminiscent of Bakhtin’s theory of the novel as genre. The stakes for Rama’s project, however, are quite different from Bakhtin’s.

In “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin identifies heteroglossia—the bringing together of different languages, representing “specific points of view on the world”—as the defining characteristic of novelistic discourse (291). Through the textual interlacing of these languages—their choreography in a process of corroboration, contestation, and subversion—the novelist both brings into view and contributes to the dynamic interaction of language that characterizes social life. At stake for Bakhtin in this essay is nothing less than the redefinition of what is at the center of novelistic creation. It is, in Bakhtin’s view, neither characters and their desires, nor the twists and turns of plot, but rather the act of “coordinating and exposing languages to each other” (365). The novel is an important genre because it is the one—Bakhtin claims—that displays heteroglossia most vibrantly. It has the capacity to bring all social languages *and* all literary genres (which Bakhtin also refers to as “languages”) within its borders.

The category of greatest import in Rama's project, on the other hand, is not language and not the novel, but rather Latin American culture. Rama describes his project as driven by a desire for "descolonización espiritual"—a desire to theorize Latin American authors as producers of literary art of cultural and aesthetic significance that draws on local cultural sources (25). Rama's project is a recuperative one, a search for a body of Latin American literary work that does not merely imitate foreign modernist forms⁴⁹ but rather draws on Latin America's own "larga y fecunda tradición inventiva" (25). In *Transculturación narrativa*, Rama articulates and celebrates the achievements of a generation of Latin American writers he calls the "transculturators," whom he identifies as unique in their ability to blend the traditional and the modern, and the native and the foreign in the novel-form. Rama describes the transculturators as achieving through this blending the independence, originality, and representativity that Latin American letters had strived to achieve since the birth of independent republics in the region. José María Arguedas, whom I write about in the first two chapters of this dissertation, is Rama's transculturator *par excellence*, but Rama also writes extensively about Juan Rulfo and João Guimarães Rosa. These three "transculturators" publish fiction during roughly the same period: the middle decades of the twentieth-century.

For Rama, the value of the transculturators' work goes beyond its aesthetic achievements; in addition to claiming that the Latin American transculturated version of literary modernism is superior to the European one on the level of literary art, Rama celebrates the novel as a site at which regional cultures, threatened by processes of rapid modernization, might be preserved. Rama's most direct influence is the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz; the origin of his project in the social sciences helps explain the anthropological thrust of his narrative theory. Ortiz is the originator of the theory of transculturation, articulated in his classic work *El contrapunteo del tabaco y el azúcar*, published in 1940. Transculturation constitutes, as critic David Frye writes, "a specifically Latin American replacement for the Anglo-American anthropological concept of *acculturación*" (xv). A model for explaining Latin American cultural transformation under the pressures of colonialism, transculturation attempts to articulate the dynamism of this process. Ortiz describes colonialism as causing in the indigenous culture some loss of cultural tradition, but draws attention to the power of selection exercised by the colonized in determining which aspects of the colonial culture to adopt and combine with local practices, as well as which aspects to resist or reject. In addition, Ortiz emphasizes how the colonizers' cultural identity shifts, too, through contact with indigenous cultures. In short, Ortiz's account of cultural mixing seeks to restore agency to colonized populations by highlighting their ability to make choices about which aspects of their culture to hold onto, as well as by calling attention to the fact that cultural transformation flows in two directions.⁵⁰ For Rama, the transculturators replicate the process of cultural blending described by Ortiz in the literary realm, creating a hybrid prose form that draws on both European and North American modernism and Latin

⁴⁹ While he does not name names, Rama makes reference to "una serie farragosa de meras imitaciones experimentales" published in recent decades in Latin America as a result of "el encandilamiento con las aportaciones técnicas de la novela vanguardista internacional" (25). This appears to be a reference to Boom authors and their immediate inheritors, though Rama explicitly exempts Borges, Fuentes, and Cortázar from this charge. Vargas Llosa is a likely target, especially considering Rama's celebration of José María Arguedas, whose literature Vargas Llosa famously described as "primitive."

⁵⁰ Rama provides an account of Ortiz's model of transculturation on pp. 38-47.

American regional cultures. Their achievements are notable for Rama both on the level of aesthetics and the level of cultural preservation: in the process of creating a uniquely Latin American novel-form, they create “neoculturaciones” (a term that also comes from Ortiz): new forms of regional cultures that are designed precisely in order to survive the pressures of modernization (Rama 39).

Though the explicitly Latin American and anthropological stakes of Rama’s project are different from Bakhtin’s genre- and language-focused proposals, a few shared convictions lie at the heart of these two literary theories. The primary resemblance between Bakhtin and Rama is their shared view of the novel as a fundamentally social phenomenon whose purpose is to put different parts of society, as represented through their languages, into conversation with one another. In a word, novels are about heteroglossia, which Bakhtin helpfully glosses as “regard[ing] one language (and the verbal world corresponding to it) through the eyes of another language” (296). For both theorists, this exercise frequently entails a reversal of social hierarchies: rather than seeing the cultural periphery through the eyes of the cultural mainstream, for example, the novel invites us to regard the mainstream through the eyes of the periphery.

It is precisely this reversal of vision that Rama celebrates in the transculturators’ work, enabled by their renovation of narrative form. In earlier Latin American fiction, according to Rama, the language of rural and indigenous characters was exclusively seen through the eyes of the language of the lettered class. Through the use of “stigmatizing” quotation marks, italics, and glossaries, authors marked this language as lacking legitimacy and authority (Rama 48). The transculturators, Rama argues, reverse this dynamic by eliminating the educated voice of the third-person narrator with which characters’ regional dialect had traditionally been compared:

La que antes era la lengua de los personajes populares y dentro del mismo texto, se oponía a la lengua del escritor o del narrador, invierte su posición jerárquica: en vez de ser la excepción y de singularizar al personaje sometido al escudriñamiento del escritor, pasa a ser la voz que narra, abarca así la totalidad del texto y ocupa el puesto del narrador manifestando su visión del mundo. (50)

Within the context of the transculturated novel, the forms of regional language spoken by “personajes populares” are no longer placed on “un segundo nivel, separada de la lengua culta y ‘modernista’ [de] los narradores” (48). Rather, at the center of the fictional text, constituting the standard and norm, we find the language of popular characters, which for Rama, as for Bakhtin, reflects these characters’ “visión del mundo.” If both regional and elite forms of language are present, as in the textual example I will turn to in a moment, Rulfo uses leveling techniques to collapse and sometimes invert the elite-narrator/popular-character hierarchy. Through rearranging what constitutes the center and the periphery of the fictional text, Rulfo, Rama argues, dignifies and legitimizes regional languages and cultures

Rulfo’s leveling narrative techniques are on display in the sixth fragment of *Pedro Páramo*. Protagonist Juan Preciado narrates the first five fragments of the novel in the first-person, telling of his journey to Comala to find his father, the eponymous Pedro Páramo, and of his puzzlement over the inscrutable behavior of Comala’s few

inhabitants. The reader becomes absorbed in Juan's attempts to decipher the mystery behind Comala's state of abandonment. At the beginning of the sixth fragment, however, Juan disappears abruptly and a new, anonymous, third-person narrator takes over.⁵¹ Later in the text, the reader discovers that this narrative shift also implies a temporal rupture; fragment six takes her back in time to Pedro Páramo's childhood.

The new narrator's first act is to describe the aftermath of a storm in the courtyard of a rural home, which is, as we will discover, Pedro Páramo's childhood home. In this passage, the narrator visibly works at establishing his authority, displaying verbal acuity sufficient to the task of rendering—even beautifying—the world through language. He uses what Rama describes as the “lengua culta y ‘modernista’” that typifies narrative discourse in Latin American novels such as Rómulo Gallegos's *Doña Bárbara* (1929) (48). No sooner does the narrator prove himself, however, than a popular voice enters the text, bringing the reader to see the narrator's “lengua culta” as pedantic. By juxtaposing learned and popular languages, Rulfo ironizes the narrator's form of expression:

El agua que goteaba de las tejas hacía un agujero en la arena del patio. Sonaba: plas plas y luego otra vez plas, en mitad de una hoja de laurel que daba vueltas y rebotes metida en la hendidura de los ladrillos. Ya se había ido la tormenta. Ahora de vez en cuando la brisa sacudía las ramas del granado haciéndolas chorrear una lluvia espesa, estampando la tierra con gotas brillantes que luego se empañaban. Las gallinas, engarruñadas como si durmieran, sacudían de pronto sus alas y salían al patio, picoteando de prisa, atrapando las lombrices desenterradas por la lluvia. Al recorrerse las nubes, el sol sacaba luz a las piedras, irisaba todo de colores, se bebía el agua de la tierra, jugaba con el aire dándole brillo a las hojas con que jugaba el aire.

—¿Qué tanto haces en el excusado, muchacho?

—Nada, mamá.

—Si sigues allí va a salir una culebra y te va a morder.

—Sí, mamá. (73-74)

In this passage, the third-person narrator provides a description of the subtlest of natural phenomena: the earth's absorption of raindrops that have fallen from a pomegranate tree, itself shaken by a light breeze. Through this account of the courtyard, the narrator gives voice to a contemplative sensibility, sensitive to the quiet beauty of climactic changes. The narrator's poetic engagement with the natural world is matched by the high, literary register of his language. The passage features lengthy, complex sentences with no shortage of subordinate clauses, with an occasional a short sentence thrown in for stylistic variety. The narrator's lexicon is learned, featuring uncommon words such as “irisar,” “empañarse,” and “hendidura.” Rulfo gives us here a picture of language and language-use that, to paraphrase Bourdieu, is an exercise in social distinction.

⁵¹ This exchange of narrators is classic Rulfo. It is, in fact, the reverse of the shift in “¡Diles que no me maten!”, a story from Rulfo's *El llano en llamas* (1953), which I analyze in Chapter Three. There the story moves from third-person to first, here from first to third. There the transfer from one narrator to another is subtle, here it is abrupt. In both texts, the shift implies an opening up of the question of narrative authority.

The dialogue that immediately follows this picture of cultured language is pointedly popular and regional. The mother's use of "Qué tanto" (for "Qué") is a regional form of expression. Her threat that a snake will come emerge from the toilet to bite Pedro is recognizable as a folk saying intended to caution young people against the evils of masturbation. Pedro's terse responses ("No, mamá," "Sí, mamá") represent the language of adolescence, which, like the mother's regional speech, functions here as cultured language's Other.

In this juxtaposition of high and popular language, Rulfo executes "the task of coordinating and exposing languages to each other" that Bakhtin identifies as most essential to the novel (365). The mother's question—"¿Qué tanto haces en el excusado, muchacho?"—constitutes a brilliant narrative deflation, born of this act of exposure. Up until this point, all of *Pedro Páramo* has been weighty. Juan Preciado narrates the five initiatory fragments in the most somber of tones: everything and everyone he encounters overflows with meaning. In this new section of the story we imagine that this serious tone will continue as the narrator weaves a delicate pastoral of rainwater, sun, breezes, and iridescent reflections. But then—unexpectedly—this tone is punctured by the bathetic. The mother's question, which, taken together with her "snake" threat, both covers and exposes her belief that her son is hiding in the outhouse in order to masturbate, invites us to laugh.

The mother's question prompts us to laugh; the target of our laughter, however, is the passage that precedes it. The unaffected language of the mother—constructed in the novel as comfortably close to the basic mechanics of human life and the human body: masturbation, urination, defecation—brings into relief the pedantic excesses of the third-person narrator, who ignores the presence of the outhouse to focus on the iridescence of raindrops. This is a very different mobilization of basic bodily functions than that which we saw in Arguedas's *Los ríos profundos*, analyzed in Chapter Two. In his novel, Arguedas removes basic bodily functions from their conventional location in the realm of the low and comic (the scene of Sancho and Don Quixote's discussion of "aguas menores" and "aguas mayores" comes to mind) and places them in the realm of the compelling, meaningful, and even beautiful. As I explored in Chapter Two, this process of resignification responds to the particular symbolic history of dirt—and specifically bird excrement or *guano*—in Peru. In Rulfo's depiction of rural Mexico, in contrast, the mother's question about her son's prolonged enclosure in the "excusado" wrenches the text into the territory of the low, shedding comic light on the narrator's high literary language. What is more, while on the level of *fabula*, the mother's question interrupts Pedro as he masturbates in the outhouse, on the level of *suzjet*, the mother interrupts the narrator's act of self-presentation. The scene thus suggests, through parallelism, that the mother's question interrupts what is in fact an act of linguistic self-pleasuring.

In this scene we see the inversion of hierarchies Rama describes as essential to the transculturators' aesthetic and political endeavor. On a first reading, it is likely that we read the passage of description straight, as itself invested with seriousness and, in turn, as investing the narrator with seriousness. Then, when we reach the mother's interruption, the dynamic flips and the poetic description is ironized. On a second reading we can glimpse indications of what is coming; for example, the clumsy repetition in the final line tips us off that something is awry: "jugaba con el aire dándole brillo a las hojas con que jugaba el aire." In the context of a passage that is about creating an image of narrative

authority such repetition would be avoided in order to give the impression that the treasure trove of words from which the narrator draws is so deep as to make repetition unnecessary.

The structure of *Pedro Páramo*—its parallel use of Juan Preciado and the third-person omniscient narrator—encourages a further comparison of these two narrative voices. Juan Preciado brings yet another language into the novel, beautifully typified in the novel's haunting opening lines: "Vine a Comala porque me dijeron que acá vivía mi padre, un tal Pedro Páramo. Mi madre me lo dijo. Y yo le prometí que vendría a verlo en cuanto ella muriera. Le apreté sus manos en señal de que lo haría; pues ella estaba por morirse y yo en un plan de prometerlo todo." While the third-person narrator speaks in complex sentences laden with adjectives, unusual words, and subordinate clauses, Juan Preciado's language is stripped down. There are no adjectives here, just agents and actions—a request, a squeeze of the hand, a promise—and Rulfo marks his narrator's discourse as unmistakably oral through a sprinkling of colloquial terms like "un tal" and "pues." Juan Preciado reveals to us in his first sentence his literal *illegitimacy* through the slightly contemptuous mention of the father he has never before met, "un tal Pedro Páramo," contrasting with the third-person narrator's initial self-presentation as legitimate and authoritative.

In the juxtaposition of these three languages—of Juan Preciado, of the third-person narrator, of Juan's mother—we see the flourishing of heteroglossia in *Pedro Páramo*. The third-person narrator (at least in this initial moment) stands in for stilted literary language, Juan's mother for orality, and Juan himself for something in-between: an orally-inflected literary language, perhaps an example of the transculturated language Rama celebrates Rulfo as creating. As we have seen through analysis of these passages from *Pedro Páramo*, and as Rama argues throughout *Transculturación narrativa*, Rulfo stages encounters between these languages ironize high literary language and exhibit the expressive and subversive power of unofficial, oral, and regional languages.

This Bakhtinian reading of Rulfo offers a response to Neil Larsen's scathing critique of Rulfo (and Rama's celebration of Rulfo) in *Modernism and Hegemony: A Materialist Critique of Aesthetic Agencies* (1990). Neil Larsen throws into question the proposal that undergirds Rama's theory: that the transculturators' novels bring alterity into the novel in new and politically significant ways; that, in other words, Rulfo and other mid-century authors create heteroglossic texts. Larsen argues that the inversion of power Rama describes as operant in Rulfo's fiction—whereby the language of regional characters, traditionally delegitimized by the novel, now came to become the language of narration—is really no inversion of power at all (50). According to Larsen, the "direct authorial word" that once spoke through the voice of the narrator, constructing regional characters as ignorant, uncivilized, even barbaric—has not disappeared at all, but rather "learned to represent itself exclusively in the cultural/aesthetic signs of its Other" (62). In other words, there is no heteroglossia in the text—no appearance and interanimation of social languages—but rather but the projection of "the screen image of a brilliant, folkloric microcosm," which hides from view the central, unitary language that produces this image, which for Larsen is the language of the modern capitalist state (65).

Larsen's critique is resonant with a line of argument with considerable traction among current scholars of Latin American literature and culture, such as those who identify with Subaltern Studies. Abril Trigo's gloss of this group's stance is essentially

Larsen's argument about *Pedro Páramo*: "Latin American national literatures and cultures are condemned as hegemonic devices at the service of the populist state" (360). While a comprehensive response to Larsen's critique—and the larger line of questioning it represents—is beyond the scope of this project, a reading of Rulfo's literary project as heteroglossic—drawing both on Rama and Bakhtin's versions of this feature of the novel—exposes a problem with Larsen's argument. Approaching Larsen by way of Bakhtin, we become immediately suspicious of the term "direct authorial word" as deployed in his work. The model of language Larsen works with appears to be rigidly binary: either language belongs to the people or to the state, to the author or to the Others he seeks to represent. Bakhtin's dialogism opens up for us the possibility that Rulfo's language is (as Rama suggests) conflicted, layered, rife with authenticity and also artificiality, and above all, very much about the interaction between different models of culture and authority. While Rama does ultimately claim a certain authenticity for Rulfo's representation of regional cultures, rendering him vulnerable to Larsen's charge of mistaking an aesthetic representation for genuine rural Mexican culture, there are elements of Rama's theory that are recuperable. In particular, his analysis of Rulfo's reimagining of the narrator represents an important critical contribution.

Rama and Bakhtin on the Gift of the Novelist

We have so far explored what I have identified as the primary resemblance between Bakhtin and Rama's theories of the novel: their vision of the genre as heteroglossic. I turn now to the theorists' second major resemblance: their construction of the novelist as uniquely qualified to mediate the interaction between different social groups. For Rama, the novelist is qualified not just to create imaginative literature, but to creatively reimagine regional cultures. In his dual role as novelist-transculturator, he digs deep into the cultural repertoire of these cultures in order to resurrect elements "muy primitivos, casi olvidados dentro del sistema cultural propio," which strike him as capable of maintaining their integrity in a new, transculturated context (47). The novelist carries out a process of "pérdidas, selecciones, redescubrimientos e incorporaciones," ultimately realizing a "reestructuración general del sistema cultural" (47). In this way, Rama characterizes the transculturator as both a "compilador" and a "genial tejedor," piecing together materials gathered from different regions, cultural traditions, and time periods with the intention of saying something original, true, and current about Latin American culture in a form that is comprehensible and compelling to the reading public (24). In short, he weaves these heteroglot materials into a novel. The transculturator-novelist is nothing less than an "agente de contacto entre culturas diversas," able to carry out through literature a singular form of cultural mediation, as well as cultural preservation for threatened regional cultures (118).

This outsized portrait of the novelist as creative, competent mediator of social difference has many similarities with what Dorothy J. Hale describes as the "utopian ideal of the novelist" represented in Bakhtin's work ("Social Discourse" 452). In her discussion of Bakhtin's "euphoric" (452) account of novelistic agency, Hale brings into focus how, for Bakhtin, personal identity poses no ultimate obstacle to novelists' ability to access, absorb, and replicate all social language, no matter how different from his own

language and social position: “Infinitely mobile through the voluntary changeability of his social points of view, his identity is defined more by his capacity for heteroglossia per se than by his particular social investments or communicative intentions. Tied to no social discourse, he is thus able to ventriloquize all social discourse” (453). For Bakhtin, as for Rama, there is no question of the novelist’s ability to integrate into the novel-form the voices of marginalized groups, and, through this process, to provide the reader with insight into these groups’ world views. Hale provides a useful metaphor for the novelist’s ability: “The novelist can, it seems, try out ideological points of view the way one would try out new pairs of glasses” (452).

It is important to note that even though the novelist can, in Hale’s words, “ventriloquize all social discourse,” Bakhtin acknowledges that this act of ventriloquization, of capturing the voice of another, is not identical in every case. Some languages are not as available to the novelist-as-ventriloquist; not all words will submit to his artistic vision: “many words stubbornly resist, others remain alien, sound foreign in the mouth of the one who appropriated them and who now speaks them; . . . it is as if they put themselves in quotation marks against the will of the speaker” (294). For Bakhtin, however, this is not an aesthetic problem because the dialogized nature of this only partially assimilated voice is itself the social phenomenon of heteroglossia that the novel has the singular power to showcase. Bakhtin’s ideal novelist does not stifle these moments when they arise, but rather cultivates them:

The prose writer does not purge words of intentions and tones that are alien to him, he does not destroy the seeds of social heteroglossia embedded in words, he does not eliminate those language characterizations and speech mannerisms (potential narrator-personalities) glimmering behind words and forms, each at a different distance from the ultimate semantic nucleus of his work, that is, the center of his own personal intentions. (298)

Present in the novelist text, according to Bakhtin, is not just discourse, but also counter-discourse, not just authorial intention but also “seeds of social heteroglossia” that might, in the hands of the right reader or in a time yet to come, blossom into languages with the power to turn the text’s meaning upside-down.

This is an important point of divergence between Bakhtin and Rama. When Rama characterizes the transculturators as bringing about the “reestructuración general del sistema cultural,” he implies that the transculturator-novelist acts as master of the regional culture and its language, actively shaping it to suit his vision for its new, modernized form (47). Unity is an important part of this vision. Writing of Rulfo, in particular, he celebrates his ability to bring “unificación expresiva” to “todos los elementos componentes de la obra: lengua, asuntos, personajes, escenarios, estructuras narrativas, imágenes, ritmos, sistemas expositivos” (132).⁵² In contrast to Bakhtin’s approving description of “alien” words present in the novelistic text, Rama celebrates the

⁵² We can assume that when Rama writes about “unificación expresiva” he is thinking, in particular, of the stories from *El llano en llamas*, particularly those such as “Macario,” “Talpa,” and “Es que somos muy pobres,” which are told by a single voicer from a single perspective. As we have already seen, *Pedro Páramo* is characterized by fragmentation and speech diversity.

transculturators' ability to create unified texts, where we can assume the "alien" word would not be welcome. Indeed, Rama does not appear to accord to the regional culture any ability to resist or register opposition to the novelist's project; this omission points to a problematic paternalism fundamental to his project.

For Rama, however, textual unification is not just an aesthetic preference. His celebration of narrative unity is itself political, conveying an important egalitarian value. Rulfo's "unified" system of representation replaces a "sistema dual, alternando la lengua literaria culta del modernismo con el registro del dialecto de los personajes, preferentemente rurales, con fines de ambientación realista" (48). In the short stories, in particular, we see the entire world through the language of the rural characters—and the seamlessness of this narrative view signals, for Rama, Rulfo's commitment to the popular as a legitimate point of view from which to narrate. Depending on our perspective, Rama's championing of unity can either show us the limits of his own commitment to heteroglossia, or reveal to us a particular literary-historical context in which literary unity—including the excision of the "alien" word—might be a valid goal for the novelist.

The Heteroglossia of Archival Fictions: From Vitality to Emptiness

In *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*, Roberto González Echevarría proposes a model for understanding Latin American narrative⁵³ that draws on Bakhtinian theories of heteroglossia and dialogism, but in stark contrast to Rama's depiction of heteroglossia as a powerful agent for both representing and fomenting the vitality of Latin American cultures, González Echevarría describes heteroglossia in the Latin American novel as in the service of representing the obsolescence and even emptiness of all narratives—past and present—of regional identities and cultures. González Echevarría does not write specifically about Rulfo or *Pedro Páramo*. His text, as its title indicates, deals with the whole of Latin American narrative, from colonial texts forward. González Echevarría, however, states more than once that Rulfo's *Pedro Páramo* constitutes an early example of what González Echevarría calls "archival fictions,"⁵⁴ texts that he characterizes as representing a particular kind of heteroglossia, which I will explore below.

For Bakhtin 'novelization'—or the flourishing of heteroglossia—is a process that originates in oral, popular culture: "on the stages of local fairs and at buffoon spectacles, the heteroglossia of the clown sounded forth, ridiculing all 'languages' and dialects" (273). The novel is born as literary genre when heteroglossia enters textual culture; Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) might be considered an early example. The kind of heteroglossia González Echevarría focuses on in Latin American narrative is much

⁵³ González Echevarría proposes not a theory of the Latin American novel, but rather of Latin American narrative, reflecting his decision to include in his study as primary texts not only novels but also other forms of literary prose, such as historical texts and scientific travel narratives.

⁵⁴ Other early examples of archival fiction include Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos*, Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad*, and Manuel Puig's *La traición de Rita Hayworth* (15). Many of the works that González Echevarría identifies as archival fictions are Boom novels. Rama, as we have seen, is interested in recuperating the generation just prior to the Boom, whom he seems to perceived as (unfairly) overshadowed by the Boom. Rulfo is the one figure of overlap in these distinct canons, speaking to his nature as a hinge figure in Latin American literature.

more limited in kind. Whereas Bakhtin's description of language diversity in the novel includes the language of "a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour" (293) so that novels are made up of "thousands of living dialogic threads" (276), González Echevarría focuses on the role official discourses play in Latin American narrative, arguing that Latin American narrative engages in a dialogic relationship with the discourse of law in the colonial period, the discourse of natural science in the nineteenth century, and the discourse of anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century. This dialogism operates according to a process of "constraint, imitation and release" (172). At first literary expression finds itself constrained by the hegemonic discourse of the time, but through imitation of that form ultimately reveals its inconsistencies or weak points and through applying pressure to these achieves "release" or liberation from the authoritative discourse's hold.

According to González Echevarría, Alejo Carpentier's *Los pasos perdidos* (1953) constitutes the founding text of a new kind of Latin American narrative, which he terms "archival fiction." Archival fictions exhibit a consciousness of this history of Latin American narrative—its engagement with hegemonic discourses—by containing within them "all previous forms of Latin American narrative," which were themselves, González Echevarría claims, imitations of legal documents, scientific reports, and ethnographies (17). The archival fiction "unwinds the history told in the old chronicles by showing that history was made of a series of conventional topics, whose coherence and authority depend on the codified belief of a period whose ideological structure is no longer current" (15-check page #). Archival fictions are not writing but "unwriting" (15-check); rather than turning Latin American languages, cultures, and identities into narrative, they take earlier narratives apart by revealing their "inner springs" and "ideological supports" (175-176). Authors of archival fictions exhibit modes of Latin American narration only to display their lifelessness.

Archival fictions are the negative of the model of heteroglossia Bakhtin presents in his work, and of the heteroglossic agency that inheres in Rama's theory of the transculturated novel. The novel as depicted by Bakhtin and Rama pulses with the vitality of pluralistic social life. The novel does not merely mirror the dialogic interrelations of language diversity as it exists in society, but nurtures new dialogisms by staging new language encounters. The frequent breathlessness of Bakhtin's prose reflects the infinitude of meanings produced by the encounter of words, and thus of points of view, in the novel: "The word . . . enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group" (276). As the active verbs in this quote indicate (the word *weaves*, *merges*, *recoils*, *intersects*), language in Bakhtin's novel is charged with life. It reveals multiple layers of meaning and creates new meanings: Bakhtin goes on say that through its activity the word "may crucially shape discourse" (276). This, too, is the effect of language in Rama's theory, where it is able to create new cultural formations—*neoculturaciones*—through encounters with other languages.

The languages present in archival fictions, in contrast, are "hollowed out, obsolete, extinct" (17). If transculturated novels are about the survival of regional culture, about ensuring these cultures' continued lives, archival fictions are about death.

Archival fiction “unleashes a ghostly procession of figures of negation” (34); it is a “crypt,” a “monumental reposit[or] of death’s debris” (177). Instead of overflowing with the social voices of countless cultures, sub-cultures, genres, ages, and professions, archival fiction is empty: “The Archive contains essentially nothing” (36), “The truth of the Archive, the secret of its secret, is that it contains no truth” (37). This is because what archival fictions do is reverse the dynamic of earlier forms of Latin American narrative; rather than attempt to know and narrate Latin American society, these narratives communicate—through conventionalized recapitulation of prior narrative strategies—that any such effort would be in vain. Like the legally, scientifically, and anthropologically inflected master narratives that preceded it, the newest iteration of Latin American narrative would, too, one day become obsolete, its claims to “coherence and authority” revealed to be based on nothing more than the exercise of power, backed by violence (15). Archival fictions lay bare “the violent, arbitrary nature of the act of empowerment” (176). The covert operations of power and violence González Echevarría locates in textuality, among other aspects of his theory, can be traced to his other large theoretical influence: Michel Foucault.

Though González Echevarría repeatedly classifies *Pedro Páramo* as an archival fiction in his text, he does not provide readings (as he does with *Los pasos perdidos*, among other novels) that substantiate this claim. The only specific detail from Rulfo’s novel referenced by González Echevarría is Rulfo’s decision to narrate much of his novel by way of characters who are dead and buried in Comala’s graveyard—a detail that fits nicely, on the surface, with his construction of archival fictions as a “crypt,” a space typified by death, stagnation, and endings. I would argue, however, that González Echevarría’s mobilization of Rulfo’s graveyard in this context is somewhat disingenuous, as Comala’s speaking graveyard does not appear to be about the expiration of past genres of Latin American narrative—or not at least in any obvious way (or any less obvious way that critics prior to González Echevarría have picked up on). *Pedro Páramo* does, as many critics have commented, obsessively cite other literary texts and literary currents including the Hebrew Bible, Greek myth, the Gothic novel, and American and European modernism. More directly relevant to González Echevarría’s reading of *Pedro Páramo* as archival fiction is the novel’s incorporation of tropes from a range of twentieth-century Latin American narrative traditions: the *novela de la revolución*, the *novela de la tierra*, and indigenismo.⁵⁵ I turn now to Rulfo’s citation of indigenismo in order to explore what González Echevarría might mean by “unwriting,” and “hollowed out language.”

⁵⁵ These genres begin to be codified as such in the 1940s. In Pedro Henríquez-Ureña’s 1945 publication, *Literary Currents in Hispanic America*, delivered as the Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard University in 1940-1941, Henríquez-Ureña describes these genres in Chapter Eight, “Problems of Today: 1920-1940.” He writes of the Mexican Revolution having a “vast literature of its own, culminating in *The Under Dogs* of Mariano Azuela and *The Eagle and the Serpent* of Martín Luis Guzmán” (188). He describes “literature concerning the Indian,” listing as its “best-known authors the Peruvians Vallejo, Falcón, and Alegría, the Ecuadorians Jorge Icaza, Fernando Chaves, and Enrique Gil Gilbert, the Bolivina Alcides Arguedas, and the Mexican Gregorio López y Fuentes” (197). He also describes a genre that takes up “the struggle with nature, the effort to master it” (198). He does not yet call this the *novela de la tierra*, but the authors he mentions (Rómulo Gallegos, José Eustasio Rivera, Ricardo Güiraldes) are unmistakably its practitioners. We can assume that Rulfo, reading and writing during this era and then publishing in the 1950s, is conversant with these trends in Latin American literary production and with the tropes proper to them.

In fragment 47 of *Pedro Páramo*, Rulfo narrates the descent of a group of Indian men from Apango, an indigenous town in the mountains, to Comala. Close analysis of the passage reveals its deeply conventional nature—its coordination of familiar tropes in order to summon a vague, stereotypical image of indigenous life. The Indians arrive in Comala on a rainy Sunday with the intention of selling their wares at a local market. They have little success: “Nadie viene. El pueblo parece estar solo” (143). The narrator switches to the present tense when he begins this section: this is the tense that is proper to the Indians, who in earlier moments of Latin American narrative have been assigned by authors to the eternal present of mythic time. This distinction is underscored when Justina Díaz, a servant who lives in Comala, enters the scene; the tense immediately switches to the imperfect.

The language and imagery in this fragment have a preprocessed quality. While the Indians wait for customers who do not arrive, they relax and enjoy themselves: “Platican, se cuentan chistes y sueltan la risa” (143). At the end of the day, walking home, they do exactly the same things, expressed using the same exact verbs, seeming to signal that a formula is being willingly deployed: “Y por el camino iban contándose chistes y soltando la risa” (144). These are the things that, in the form of Latin American narrative Rulfo is citing, Indians men do: they chat, tell jokes, and laugh. They also wait: “Tienden sus yerbas en el suelo . . . y esperan” (142); “Los indios esperan” (143). They are represented as simpler and happier beings than their Western counterparts: they respond to the setback the rain has caused to the sale of their wares with timeless wisdom: “<<Ahi será otro día>>, dijeron” (144). They walk home laughing and telling jokes in any case. They are not individuals with desires and fears rooted in childhood experiences, like Pedro Páramo and Susana San Juan, but rather a collectivity always referred to in the plural, as “los indios” (143, 144).

Rulfo displays here a very particular image of the Indian: premodern, simple, happy, idle, lacking individuality. The passage contains “essentially nothing,” like the Archive, because it contains a conventional representation that we recognize as artificial, lacking any grounding in reality (36). The problem, however, with González Echevarría’s analysis of *Pedro Páramo* as archival fiction is that this is not uniformly true for all of the languages in the novel. González Echevarría focuses on one kind of language Rulfo uses in his text—the spent language of obsolete Latin American narrative forms—but does not consider how this language is in dialogue with many others in *Pedro Páramo*, which exceed this characterization.

Rulfo’s Micro-Portraits

Bakhtin characterizes the novel as a “system” of languages. In order to understand “the higher unity of the work as a whole” he writes, we must understand how these languages work together (262). Analysis of the system of languages Rulfo creates, I argue, leads us to the realization that *Pedro Páramo*, as González Echevarría suggests, might be read as self-reflexive text that is itself about different strategies of representation. It exhibits, in a distanced and sometimes ironizing fashion, modes of representation that, as González Echevarría further suggests, are no longer viable, such as the indigenista system of representation analyzed above. On the other hand—and here I

depart from González Echevarría and find myself closer to Rama—these are not the only modes of representation that Rulfo deploys in *Pedro Páramo*. González Echevarría’s argument overlooks the bulk of the languages the novel deploys, which are not “hollowed out.” Perhaps most importantly, González Echevarría overlooks Rulfo’s significant contribution to creating new forms of mediation at the mid-century moment, many of which Rama highlights in his study.

But I must also differentiate my approach from Rama’s. Whereas Rama’s theory of narrative transculturation depicts the novelist as modeling through the novel viable avenues of cultural transformation, which have the potential to redound to the benefit of regional cultures, the theory of narrative activism I have elaborated throughout my dissertation depicts the mid-century novelist as creatively using the most unexpected corners of fictional texts in order to lay bare, contest, and resist colonial structures of power as present in thought and language, especially those that underlie inherited narrative structures. I have argued that the effect of these texts’ narrative activism—their politicized mobilization of narrative form—is on the novel-form itself, which is decolonized through this process, and on the reader, who is newly sensitized to the molding power of ideology on her own thought and language structures while being exposed to more pluralistic, egalitarian models of discourse and perception. Thus, while I concur with Rama’s characterization of Rulfo’s fiction as heteroglossic in the sense of living, vibrant, and productive (bringing about new moments of encounter and contestation), my own stake in reading Rulfo is quite different from Rama’s emphasis on cultural preservation. I am interested in how Rulfo deepens and broadens the Latin American novel’s heteroglossia through manipulation of formal categories of fiction. Along these lines, I now turn to a mode of representation I see Rulfo as pioneering in *Pedro Páramo* to this end, the micro-portrait.

With micro-portrait I refer to passages that provide brief yet rich portraits of minor characters through providing insight into key experiences (or occasionally a key experience) of their lives. The micro-portrait is often the only access we have to the complex interiority of a character who otherwise is of marginal importance in *Pedro Páramo*. Compressed in most cases into a single paragraph, not usually longer than a page and often much shorter, the micro-portrait provides access to the minor character’s subjectivity. The inner life of this character is presented impressionistically, often through a succession of linked images, sometimes in first-person narration and sometimes in third. The mode of representation is suggestive rather than exhaustive, a brief opening onto what Rulfo reveals to be an expansive interiority, to which we have fleeting yet penetrating access. This access is marked as especially significant because micro-portraits tend to be of figures who are mute (Dorotea), mad (Abundio), forgotten (an anonymous man, maimed by Pedro Páramo), or unseen (as in the case of Justina, Susana San Juan’s servant). The micro-portrait is a mode of representation that acknowledges and memorializes not just the presence of, but also the individuality and unseen depths of, the most marginalized figures in Rulfo’s text.

To use the language that Alex Woloch develops in *The One vs. the Many: Minor Characters and the Space of the Protagonist in the Novel*, the micro-portrait attempts to compensate for “the gap between a minor character’s implied being and the manifestation of this being in the fictional universe” (24). As Woloch explains, character has traditionally been conceived of as divided between “structure” and “reference”: a

character is seen either to fulfill a structural role in plot, carrying out a defined function, or as referring to a complete individual, whose existence exceeds any particular function in the text. This tension is particularly pronounced with respect to minor, or as Woloch calls them, “subordinate” characters, who tend to fill functional roles in the text, making them, in Woloch’s suggestive phrase, “the proletariat of the novel” (27). Minor characters who are primarily structural occupy less of what Woloch calls “character-space” than those who have greater referential presence (character-space refers to the “charged encounter between an individual human personality and a determined space and position with the narrative as a whole”(14). The micro-portrait as narrative unit, I suggest, signals to the reader a special valuing of that character and subsequently, enlarges the character-space occupied by that character, or his importance when surveying the meaning of the novel as a whole.

The issue of the minor character evokes a particularly interesting tension in Rulfo’s fiction because of Rulfo’s idiosyncratic novelistic aesthetics. “*Pedro Páramo* is a work made of less” (855), writes Ernesto Franco, referring to the pared down nature of the novel, which Rulfo described crafting through a process of reduction and erasure: “eliminé muchas páginas, debí haber sacado unas cien páginas” (Ruffinelli 469). Rulfo’s preference for compact modes of expression is well evidenced in his oeuvre, brief in itself and comprised of short forms: short stories and a short novel. Rulfo explicitly articulates this preference for condensed, synthetic representation in his essay “El desafío de la creación”:

Para mí el cuento es un género realmente más importante que la novela, porque hay que concentrarse en unas cuantas páginas para decir muchas cosas, hay que sintetizar, hay que frenarse; en eso el cuentista se parece un poco al poeta, al buen poeta. El poeta tiene que ir frenando al caballo y no desbocarse; si se desboca y escribe por escribir, le salen las palabras una tras otra y, entonces, siempre fracasa. Lo esencial es precisamente contenerse, no desbocarse, no vaciarse; el cuento tiene esa particularidad; yo precisamente prefiero el cuento, sobre todo, a la novela, porque la novela se presta mucho a esas divagaciones. . . . Es muy difícil, es muy difícil en tres, cuatro, o diez páginas se pueda contar una historia que otros cuentan en doscientos páginas; ésa es, más o menos, la idea que yo tengo sobre la creación. . . . (385)

In this statement, synthesis and density emerge as salient aesthetic values for Rulfo, better exemplified on his view by the poem than by the novel. In this way, minor characters in *Pedro Páramo* pose an interesting aesthetic possibility for Rulfo as a writer: the opportunity to represent a life not in two-hundred pages, not in ten, and not even in three, but rather in a single paragraph. Rulfo’s articulation of his aesthetics suggests that the point of such an act would be to strip away the inessential to get to the essence of a human life. This is what Rulfo attempts with the micro-portrait. According to “El desafío de la creación,” this aesthetic act demands a high level of artistic skill, investment, and care. The micro-portrait, though occupying a small space in the novel, might constitute the site of greatest aesthetic achievement: the site at which the novel

says the most in the smallest number of words. The valuing of narrative density by Rulfo brings a new level of importance to the “subordinated” minor character.

I turn now to the most memorable micro-portrait in *Pedro Páramo* in order to explore its mechanics and effects. Abundio Martínez’s micro-portrait occurs at the novel’s climax, or perhaps better said, it replaces the novel’s climax. Under the influence of heavy drink in the immediate aftermath of his wife’s unexpected death, Abundio murders Pedro Páramo, his father, by stabbing him with a knife. Abundio is so drunk he has no conscious awareness of what he is doing. The reader experiences the scene through Abundio’s consciousness, rendered through free indirect discourse. As such, she sees nothing of Pedro’s murder, but rather is provided extended access to Abundio’s thoughts, which open onto his life with his recently deceased wife, Cuca:

Pensó en su mujer que estaba tendida en el catre, solita, allá en el patio de su casa, adonde él la había sacado para que se serenara y no se apestara pronto. La Cuca, que todavía ayer se acostaba con él, bien viva, retozando como una potranca, y que lo mordía y le raspaba la nariz con su nariz. La que le dio aquel hijito que se les murió apenas nacido, dizque porque ella estaba incapacitada: el mal de ojo y los fríos y la rescoldera y no sé cuántos males tenía su mujer, según le dijo el doctor que fue a verla ya a última hora, cuando tuvo que vender sus burros para traerlo hasta acá, por el cobro tan alto que le pidió. Y de nada había servido... La Cuca, que ahora estaba allá aguantando el relente, con los ojos cerrados, ya sin poder ver amanecer; ni este sol ni ningún otro. (176)

In this paragraph we visit, in quick succession, a number of key moments in Abundio’s life with Cuca: first the image of her dead body laid out on a cot in his house’s courtyard, then playful images of the two of them in bed together just the night before, the memory of the child who died as a newborn, his wife’s many illnesses, and finally the memory of selling of his donkeys in order to try to get her the medical help she needed. We have, in this short space, the story of a marriage, including its sweetness and pleasures as well as its tragedies: the loss of a child, the loss of a wife. The passage includes the only joyful sexual act in the novel. Through this dense sequence of images, Rulfo represents Abundio as a sympathetic character, who gives voice to the most genuine expression of love and affection in the novel. Crucial to winning the reader’s sympathy is the evidence of Abundio’s poverty—his inability to get his wife or child needed medical help. The reader interprets Abundio’s murder of Pedro as rage at this injustice, ironically unleashed against the person responsible for his marginal existence: the wealthy father who abandoned him.

The passage is finely wrought on the level of form; it resembles a poem in the structure and the quality of its language. It is structured by anaphora; each sentence begins with “La Cuca que” or “La que,” and then contains images from the couple’s life together. The passage features vivifying figurative language: Cuca behaves like a “frolicking filly” in bed with Abundio. There are also beautiful moments of language, such as “le raspaba la nariz con su nariz,” which through the softness of the liquid consonants and the sibilant “z,” and the repetition of “nariz,” mimics through its sounds the tender reciprocity of the moment it describes. The poetic density of the passage—the

interplay of sound and image to create a complex, layered unit of representation—allows Abundio to exceed his functional role as Pedro’s murderer precisely in the moment that he should be contained within that role.

This micro-portrait features a form of mediation whose effects are diametrically opposed to those created by the scene of the Indians from Apango. Abundio’s parallel acts of tender reflection and murderous brutality are like nothing we have seen before in Latin American literature; there is nothing prepackaged or dead about this language. The passage does manifest many of the characteristics of a transculturated text as defined by Rama. Transculturation is present on the level of language, as the orally inflected language sprinkled throughout the passage—the use of diminutives, the regionalism “dizque”—mixes with language structures proper to poetry. Narrative strategies inherited from North American and European modernism enable the skillful narrative deflection Rulfo executes here—the turning of the narrator’s attention inward, toward Abundio’s thoughts, rather than out toward a spectacular murder by stabbing. Erich Auerbach writes of modernist novels, “exterior events have lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events” (538). Here the “inner event,” Abundio’s absorption in reflection on his relationship to Cuca, eclipses our access to the dramatic actions taking place at the same moment.

The transculturated elements of the passage, however, do not account for the mode of representation that we see here. The micro-portrait draws on the modernist investment in the fragment as genre, but it is also the product of Rulfo’s stylistic preference for compressed narrative and his investment in the heteroglossic, and fundamentally political, project of creating space in the novel for minor voices. These dual commitments—aesthetic and political—lead Rulfo to develop a new mode of representation for minor voices as represented by the figure of the minor character.

Conclusion

I began this analysis of *Pedro Páramo*’s politics of form by observing a tension between two theories that seek to account for Rulfo’s bold formal experiments: Ángel Rama’s theory of narrative transculturation and Roberto González Echevarría’s theory of archival fiction. Both critics draw attention to *Pedro Páramo*’s narrative inclusiveness and linguistic diversity: its development of plot, character, and theme through multiple, interwoven modes of representation. And yet, as we have seen, Rama interprets *Pedro Páramo*’s heteroglot project as a neoculturation—a vital, living form of discourse with tremendous social agency—while González Echevarría characterizes it as a sign of the exhaustion of narrative’s social importance.

By way of a return to Bakhtin, I have sought to resolve the contradiction between these two theories by proposing that both kinds of representation enter into dialogue with one another in *Pedro Páramo*: vibrant, new, transculturated modes of representation and ossified, lifeless, expired modes. The new, more inclusive model of heteroglossia I offer borrows from Rama and González Echevarría’s respective theories of transculturation and archival fiction, while leaving elements of each theory behind. From González Echevarría I have taken the concept of *Pedro Páramo* as an active reflection on the process of artistic mediation, but I have challenged his notion that the

novel allegorizes narrative mediation's obsolescence. I base this critique on the objection that González Echevarría interprets heteroglossia so narrowly—focusing only on the citation of official discourses in the novel—that he provides an incomplete account of *Pedro Páramo*'s capacious dialogism. From Rama I have taken the contention that a primary political contribution of Rulfo's project is the deepening of the Latin American novel's dialogism through the invention of new ways to incorporate popular, regional cultures and voices into fiction, and hence to develop via aesthetic agency a strengthened capacity for reimagining the social and political realm in more pluralistic terms. Indeed, Rama's emphasis on the political significance of Rulfo's recruitment of a new generation of narrators from the ranks of "personajes populares" was the spark that ignited my own critical project: investigating the emergence of a new politics of form in Latin American mid-century literature (Rama 50). Though my debt to Rama is thus significant, I have also shed a significant valence of his theory in elaborating my own vision of Rulfo's heteroglossia: his investment in describing Rulfo's work as not just the creation of a transculturated literary form, but the actual reimagining, within that form, of a whole cultural system.

Finally, I have approached *Pedro Páramo* through the lens of narrative activism in order to understand how, as a narrative unit, the micro-portrait contributes to Rulfo's dialogic project. I have interpreted the micro-portrait as an attempt to create a mode of representation that provides him with a new way to value the languages and world views of Mexico's rural poor. Rulfo's valuing of compact narrative forms enables him to create a language, featured in the micro-portrait, which through its layered, carefully wrought quality constructs minor voices in the novel as sites of depth, beauty, and importance. Through exploring how the micro-portrait enables Rulfo to represent minor characters in a new way, I have sought to expand our understanding of his fiction's heteroglossic ambitions.

Works Cited

- Alatorre, Antonio. "¿Qué es la crítica literaria?" *Revista de la Universidad de México*. 27 (1973): 1-7. Print.
- Alber, Jan, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Brian Richardson. "Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models." *Narrative* 18.2 (2010): 113-136. Project Muse. Web. 13 October 2011.
- Alegria, Ciro. *El mundo es ancho y ajeno*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1982. Print.
- Archibald, Priscilla. *Imagining Modernity in the Andes*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2011. Print.
- Arguedas, José María. "Entre el kechwa y el castellano, la angustia del mestizo." *Indios, mestizos, y señores*. Lima: Editorial Horizonte, 1987. 35-38. Print.
- . "La novela y el problema de la expresión literaria en el Perú." *Yawar Fiesta*. Buenos Aires: Losada, 1977. Print.
- . *Los ríos profundos*. Ed. Ricardo González Vigil. Madrid: Cátedra, 2000. Print.
- . *Yawar Fiesta*. Buenos Aires: Losada, 1977. Print.
- . *Yawar Fiesta*. Trans. Frances Horning Barraclough. Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 1985. Print.
- . *El zorro de arriba y el zorra de abajo*. Ed. Eve-Marie Fell. D.F.: Archivos, 1990. Print.
- Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. Print.
- Bakhtin, M. M. "Discourse in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. Print.
- . "Discourse Typology in Prose." *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*. Ed. Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971. 176-196. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z: An Essay*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill & Wang, 1974. Print.

- Beyersdorff, Margot. "Voice of the Runa: Quechua Substratum in the Narrative of Jose Maria Arguedas." *Latin American Indian Literatures Journal* 2.1 (1986): 28-48. Print.
- Blanco Aguinaga, Carlos. Introducción. *El llano en llamas*. By Juan Rulfo. Ed. Carlos Blanco Aguinaga. Madrid: Cátedra, 2008. 11-29. Print.
- . "Realidad y estilo de Juan Rulfo." *Revista Mexicana de Literatura* 1.1 (1955): 59-86. Print.
- Booth, Wayne. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961. Print.
- Brower, Gary. "Diles que no me maten: aproximación a su estructura y significado." *Nueva narrativa hispanoamericana* 3.1 (1973): 231-35. Print.
- Cadava, Eduardo. "The Guano of History." *The Other Emerson*. Ed. Branka Arsić and Cary Wolfe. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010. 101-129. Print.
- de la Cadena, Marisol. *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991*. Durham: Duke UP, 2000. Print.
- Capuano, Thomas M. "La caracterización del viejo en 'La cuesta de las comadres' de Juan Rulfo." *Cincinnati Romance Review* 6 (1985): 37-51. Print.
- Castro Klarén, Sara. *El mundo mágico de José María Arguedas*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1973. Print.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978. Print.
- Clinton, Stephen T. "Form and Meaning in Juan Rulfo's 'Talpa.'" *Romance Notes* 16 (1975): 520-5. Print.
- Cornejo Polar, Antonio. *Literatura y sociedad en el Perú: La novela indigenista*. Lima: Lasontay, 1980. Print.
- . *Los universos narrativos de José María Arguedas*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1973. Print.
- Coronado, Jorge. *The Andes Imagined: Indigenismo, Society, and Modernity*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. Print.
- Cueto, Mario. "Indigenismo and Rural Medicine in Peru: The Indian Sanitary Brigade and Manuel Nuñez Butrón." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 65.1 (1991): 22-41. Proquest. Web. 17 Dec. 2009.

- D'Lugo, Carol Clark. *The Fragmented Novel in Mexico: The Politics of Form*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997.
- Douglas, Mary. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. Routledge, 1984. ebrary. Web. 10 Oct. 2011.
- Elmore, Peter. "Las lecciones de la memoria." *Amor y Fuego: José María Arguedas 25 años después, Lima, 9-11 noviembre de 1994*. Eds. Maruja Martínez and Nelson Manrique. Lima: DESCO, CEPES, and SUR, 1995. Print.
- Emery, Amy Fass. *The Anthropological Imagination in Latin American Literature*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1996. Print.
- Escalante, Evodio. "Texto histórico y texto social." *Juan Rulfo: Toda la obra*. Ed. Claude Fell. España: Archivos, 1991. Print.
- Escobar, Alberto. *Arguedas, o la utopía de la lengua*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1984. Print.
- Foster, George M. "Cofradía and Compadrazgo in Spain and Spanish America." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 9.1 (1953): 1-28. Print.
- Franco, Ernesto. "Pedro Páramo (Juan Rulfo, Mexico, 1955)." *The Novel*. Vol. 1. Ed. Franco Moretti. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2006. 2 vols. Print.
- Fuentes, Carlos. *La nueva novela hispanoamericana*. Mexico City: Cuadernos de Joaquín Mortiz, 1969. Print.
- García, Pablo. "Drama y tragedia en '¡Diles que no me maten!' De Juan Rulfo." *AlterTexto: Revista del Departamento de Letras de la Universidad Iberoamericana* 2.4 (2004): 24-46. Print.
- Genette, Gérard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Trans. Jane E. Lewin. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1980. Print.
- Goldgel Carballo, Victor. "Ambigüedad y justicia en el llano en llamas de Juan Rulfo." *Arbor: Ciencia, Pensamiento y Cultura*. 183.724 (2007): 307-318. Web. 5 July 2012.
- Gollnick, Brian. "The Regional Novel and Beyond." *The Cambridge Companion to the Latin American Novel*. Ed. Efraín Kristal. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. Print.
- González Boixo, José Carlos. Introduction. *Pedro Páramo*. By Juan Rulfo. Ed. José Carlos González Boixo. Madrid: Cátedra, 2002. 11-52. Print.

- González Echeverría, Roberto. *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative*. Durham: Duke UP, 1998. Print.
- Hale, Dorothy J. Rev. of *The Eye's Mind: Literary Modernism and Visual Culture*, by Karen Jacobs. *Modernism/modernity* 8.3 (2001): 538-540. *Project Muse*. Web. 29 August 2011.
- Hale, Dorothy J. "The Novel as Social Discourse: Introduction." *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1900-2000*. Ed. Dorothy J. Hale. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006. 435-461. Print.
- Halperin Donghi, Tulio. *Historia contemporánea de América latina*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2010. Print.
- Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *Shadows of Ethics: Criticism and the Just Society*. Durham: Duke UP, 1999. Print.
- Icaza, Jorge. *Huasipungo*. Barcelona: Plaza & Janés Editores, 1998. Print.
- Keats, John. *The Complete Poetical Works And Letters of John Keats*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1899. Hathi Trust Digital Library. Web. 15 November 2012.
- Kokotovic, Misha. "Transculturación narrativa y modernidad andina: Nueva lectura de Yawar Fiesta." Trans. José Ruiz. *José María Arguedas: Hacia una poética migrante*. Ed. Sergio R. Franco. Pittsburgh: Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, 2006. 39-60. Print.
- Lambright, Anne. *Creating the Hybrid Intellectual: Subject, Space, and the Feminine in the Narrative of José María Arguedas*. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007. Print.
- Landreau, John C.. "Hacia una relectura de la leyenda autobiográfica de José María Arguedas." *Indigenismo hacia el fin del milenio: Homenaje a Antonio Cornejo Polar*. Ed. Mabel Moraña. Pittsburgh: Biblioteca de América, 1998. Print.
- Larsen, Neil. *Modernism and Hegemony: A Marxist Critique of Aesthetic Agencies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990. Print.
- Matto de Turner, Clorinda. *Aves sin nido*. Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 1994. Print.
- Melgar Bao, Ricardo. "Juego de símbolos e identidades en la ciudad prostibularia. 'Los zorros' de José María Arguedas." *Boletín de Antropología Americana* 32 (1998): 111-126. Print.
- Millay, Amy Nauss. *Voices from the 'fuente viva': The Effect of Orality in Twentieth-Century Spanish American Narrative*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2005. Print.

- Muñoz, Silverio. *José María Arguedas y el mito de la salvación por la cultura*. Minneapolis: Instituto para el Estudio de Ideologías y Literatura, 1980. Print.
- Olivier, Florence. "La seducción de los fantasmas en la obra de Juan Rulfo." Trans. Mario Zamudio. *Juan Rulfo: Toda la obra*. Ed. Claude Fell. Madrid: Ediciones Archivos, 1992. 617-50. Print.
- Ortega, Julio. "Texto, comunicación y cultura en *Los ríos profundos* de José María Arguedas." *Nueva revista de filología hispánica* 31.1 (1982): 44-82. Print.
- Peavler, Terry J. *El texto en llamas: El arte narrativo de Juan Rulfo*. New York: Peter Lang, 1988. Print.
- Piwowarczyk, Mary Ann. "The Narratee and the Situation of Enunciation: A Reconsideration of Prince's Theory." *Genre* 9.2 (1976): 161-77. Print.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. New York: Routledge, 1992. Print.
- Prince, Gerald. "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee." *Essentials of the Theory of Fiction*. Ed. Michael J. Hoffman and Patrick D. Murphy. Durham : Duke University Press, 2005. Print.
- . "Notes Toward a Categorization of Fictional 'Narratees.'" *Genre* 4.1 (1971): 100-106. Print.
- Rama, Angel. *Transculturación narrativa en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones El Andariego, 2007. Print.
- Rancière, Jacques. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Trans. Gabriel Rockhill. London: Continuum, 2004. Print.
- Richardson, Brian. *Unnatural Voices: Extreme Narration in Modern and Contemporary Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006. Print.
- Rochabrún, Guillermo, ed.. *La mesa redonda sobre <<Todas las Sangres>> del 23 de junio de 1965*. Lima: IEP/PUCP, 2000. Print.
- Rodríguez Alcalá, Hugo. *El arte de Juan Rulfo: Historias de vivos y difuntos*. México: Ediciones Bellas Artes, 1965. Print.
- Rowe, William. *Mito e ideología en la obra de José María Arguedas*. Lima: Instituto Nacional de la Cultura, 1979. Print.
- . *Rulfo: El llano en llamas*. Valencia: Grant & Cutler, 1987. Print.

- . "Voz, memoria y conocimiento en los primeros escritos de José María Arguedas." *Amor y fuego: José María Arguedas, 25 años después*. Eds. Maruja Martínez and Nelson Manrique. Lima: SUR Casa de Estudios del Socialismo, 1995. 261-71. Print.
- Ruffinelli, Jorge. "La leyenda de Rulfo: cómo se construye el escritor desde el momento en que deja de serlo." *Juan Rulfo: Toda la obra*. Ed. Claude Fell. España: Archivos, 1991. 447-470. Print.
- Rulfo, Juan. "El desafío de la creación." *Juan Rulfo: Toda la obra*. Ed. Claude Fell. España: Archivos, 1991. 383-385. Print.
- . *El llano en llamas*. Ed. Carlos Blanco Aguinaga. Madrid: Cátedra, 1985. Print.
- . *Pedro Páramo*. Ed. José Carlos González Boixo. Madrid: Cátedra, 2002. Print.
- Sniader Lanser, Susan. *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. Print.
- Tarica, Estelle. "José María Arguedas and the Mediating Voice." *The Inner Life of Mestizo Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008. Print.
- . "Mestizaje/ Créolité: Cultural Decolonization and Modern Mexican, Andean, and French Caribbean Fiction." Diss. Cornell University 2000. Print.
- Uriel García, José. *El nuevo indio*. Cuzco: H. G. Rozas Sucesores, 1937. Print.
- Vallejo, César. *Fabla salvaje, El Tungsteno, Paco Yunque*. Lima: Ediciones Peisa, 1973. Print.
- Vargas Llosa, Mario. "Literatura y suicidio: el caso de Arguedas. El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo." *Revista Iberoamericana* 110-111 (1980): 3-28. Web. 12 July 2012. Print.
- Woloch, Alex. *The One vs. the Many*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2003. Print.