

INTRODUCTION

ARGUEDAS

Rethinking Community

But the survival of the Indians depended on making possible the impossible.

—Horacio Legrás, *Literature and Subjection*, on the indigenous logic in *Yawar fiesta*

A true political act: it makes the impossible possible.

—Slavoj Žižek, *Violence*, on the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

This book takes up the Benjaminean definition of “illumination” as “that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to someone singled out by history at a moment of danger,” and envisions José María Arguedas and his work as the embodiment of this experience. He perceived himself as signaled out by history to be a “living bond” between the creole and the indigenous parts of Peruvian society.¹ He faced what was seen as the threat of imminent annihilation of the Quechua Indians and their culture at the moment of rapid modernization of mid-twentieth-century Peru. His belief in his mission to prevent, or at least to record, this process, which appeared as tragedy to him, made him look at the Peruvian present through the prism of the Quechua worldview,² rooted in the past and in the history of long duration, or as Arguedas’s friend and one of the founders of the Liberation Theology Gustavo Gutiérrez put it, “en el tiempo de los sabios,” “within the temporality of the wise.”³ The force of Arguedas’s propositions lies in the Andean perspective that guides him in his representations of the Peruvian empirical reality, where the “Andean perspective” does not mean that the novels recover the original, intact, or authentic Quechua worldview. Instead, Arguedas emerges as a thinker who creatively processes various theoretical tools available to him through his vital and intellectual experiences: university education, Marxist thought

of the 1930s and 1960s, and his own experience and study of the Quechua conceptual universe and language.

My analysis revolves around the concepts of community, political subjectivity, sovereignty, juridical norm, and revolutionary change. Arguedas's arguably most ambitious and controversial novel, *Todas las sangres* (All the bloods)⁴ is at the center of this investigation, since it deals with the problem of nation building most directly. Study of his other novels, *Deep Rivers*, *El Sexto*, and *The Fox from Up Above and The Fox from Down Below* (*The Foxes*), which I examine in more detail in the last chapter, offers a panoramic rereading of Arguedas's fiction and elaborates further on the target concepts.⁵ The originality of Arguedean political thought becomes evident when the textual analyses of the novels are introduced into a dialogue with the important political philosophers who address the problem of community, such as Walter Benjamin, Jean-Luc Nancy, Carl Schmitt, Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau, Giorgio Agamben, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Paolo Virno, Slavoj Žižek, and Álvaro García Linera.

According to Nancy and Agamben, the thought on community in political European theory has come to a halt. In our world, where the sphere of the political is profoundly intertwined with the sphere of economics, where the distinction between the public and the private spheres has eroded, it is almost impossible to imagine alternatives to the existing model of liberal democracy. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, political philosophers such as Hardt and Negri, Agamben and Žižek ask: How can the thought on community move beyond the horizon of a neoliberal democratic model? How can a political subjectivity and emancipatory alternatives be envisioned? What is the place of the popular in our political world? And, finally, what are the place and form of revolutionary and productive antagonism in further political developments of the world community, as we look at it from the second decade of the twenty-first century? How can the horizon of political possibilities be opened?

One characteristic that unites Arguedas's political thought and this heterogeneous group of philosophers is the feeling that "the liberal tradition no longer offers the intellectual resources to meet the challenges . . . of the modern world."⁶ This is also the reason for the presence of Schmitt among the neo-Marxist thinkers. Schmitt's political thought has received renewed attention from philosophers from both the antiliberal Right and the Left between the 1980s and the present. Setting aside his daunting legacy of participation in the regime of the Reich, leftist thinkers like Benjamin, Agamben, and Žižek successfully mined his theory for the profound criticism of the legalism that marks the liberal democratic model. My use of

Schmitt's political thought will follow the lead of these critics of the model of liberal democracy who look to redefine the meanings of the concepts of political subjectivity, oppositional pole, antagonism, and revolutionary change for the politics of the twenty-first century.

My interest in writing about political concepts in Arguedean thought was triggered by my reading of *Mesa Redonda sobre Todas las Sangres* (Roundtable on All the bloods) of 1965.⁷ At this event, the validity of Arguedas's representation of Peruvian reality in the novel was severely questioned by a group of progressive scholars. The most acute point of divergence between the discussants was the identity of the persons who lived in the Peruvian sierra. For Arguedas, the majority of people living in the Peruvian sierra and represented in the novel were Indians. For the social scientists, the young historian Henri Favre and important sociologist Aníbal Quijano, they were peasants, and presenting them as "Indians" implied a "historical disbalance" ("desnivel histórico") in the narration.⁸ Two terms at play here, "Indians" and "peasants," defined the discourses of the discussants. Arguedas put on the table categories of a cultural, anthropological nature: for him the people of the sierra could be Indians, mestizos, or cholos. For Favre and Quijano the economic categories were prevalent. Therefore, they spoke of peasants, workers, and the feudal elites. The two positions enunciated different types of narrative projects—literary, scientific, and political—and also engendered different systems of expectations and readings of intentionality, where intentionality is understood as the association of certain types of behavior with a social category, defined as property of a social actor. Thus, for Henri Favre the fact that the subaltern persons were identified as Indians marked them as exploitable individuals. For Arguedas, this label did not carry this negative meaning but rather implied that they had certain cultural resources that gave them a sense of belonging, which the decultured workers did not possess. Thus, the Indians escape the alienating *tristeza* (sadness), while the other workers are subject to it and as a result sink into drunkenness and desperation. From their chosen categories, Arguedas and the social scientists interpreted differently the antagonisms between the social groups in the Peruvian sierra, and imagined very different outcomes for these antagonisms. Favre and Quijano envisioned class struggles, which could, theoretically, satisfactorily conclude in a project of a homogenization appropriate for nation building. Arguedas's hopes for articulation of the nation project were similar, but he read the antagonism between the Indians and the *mistis* as deeply rooted in the cultural heterogeneity,⁹ inherited from the centuries of colonial domination. Consequently, Arguedas was torn by

contradictions. Desiring for Peru to become a nation, he recognized that it was not a homogeneous society required for such a national project and acutely perceived the distinctly constructed subjectivities and sovereignties that were clashing within the Peruvian national territory. Our purpose will not be to solve these unsolvable contradictions but to signal the location of the problem, to find the loci of the antagonisms and the possibilities of negotiation between different modes of political existence represented in the Arguedean text.

Since Favre and Quijano, among others, understood antagonism, politics, and sovereignty differently than Arguedas, it resulted in the conclusion, on the part of these social scientists, that the novel was an ill-informed representation of Peruvian reality.¹⁰ Arguedas wrote a note after the event that declared his intention to take his own life, which indicates that he took seriously these accusations, recognizing them as having some profound truth.¹¹ This episode could be read as follows: on one hand, both Arguedas and the social scientists had the nation-state as their ultimate object of desire. But Arguedas simultaneously also recognized the existence of an alternative project of community represented by the indigenous ayllu. Nonetheless, nationalistic projects require exclusivity, as they are based on the idea of the subsumption of individuality into the nation and the delegation of sovereignty and of monopoly on violence to the state. Possibly, the truth that Arguedas perceived in the other scholars' accusation obliged him to see that he was putting irreconcilable projects side by side: the defense of distinct sovereignty of the ayllu and the nationalist project. His fiction, I propose, is a continuous struggle to live and write through this contradiction.

In other words, Arguedas was elaborating a defense of the modern nation-state as a horizon of expectation, and also its simultaneous critique. Since *Todas las sangres* argued the Indians' right to a certain degree of political autonomy and cultural difference, Arguedas's position was read as subverting the national project and curbing its possibility to resist the invasion of transnational capital. What is worse, it was read as an idealistic desire to keep the Indians as happily exploited persons, precluding them from emancipation, which developmentalist theories optimistically promised as a positive and dignified outcome for all the wretched of the earth. That was certainly a terrible accusation for a thinker like Arguedas. But looking at this accusation from the distance of fifty years, it is striking to see that Arguedas prophetically announced the heterogeneous conception of the national community that emerges in our day in the neighboring Andean nation, Bolivia, embodied in the revisionist attempts that characterized the Constituent Assembly in the year 2007, and the redefinition of

the Bolivian state as “plurinational.” Far from undermining Bolivia’s ability to stand up for its sovereignty in the face of transnational capital, President Juan Evo Morales Ayma’s government both allowed and supported these legal changes and simultaneously lowered the external debt as never before. It is also continuously promoting however gradual attempts at nationalization, which relatively increase the country’s claims to sovereign decisions in both economic and political domains.¹²

Let us consider Arguedean theorization in a sort of prophetic light, in relation to the current legal debates around the indigenous autonomies. In 2003, Bolivian scholar Enrique Mier Cueto phrased the project for Bolivia as a plurinational state as an imperative: “Bolivia in this moment of its history faces a historical challenge of establishing the basis for an intercultural co-living. This task requires before anything and initially, a *collective will* to co-live with the foreign, a will that, in order to be fructiferous in the future, should be based on a true *understanding* of the Other in all his strangeness and peculiarity.”¹³ This evaluation of Andean reality calls into dialogue two poles that see each other as radical others. But Mier Cueto’s sentence is prescriptive rather than descriptive. In the process of the Constituent Assembly in Bolivia in 2006–7, such legal and administrative logistics of co-existing with the other as that of the existence of indigenous autonomies within the departmental autonomies had provoked many conflicts that spilled over from the institutional debate onto the streets, the situation that did not smooth over the years of Evo Morales’s presidency, and which, in fact, remains patently recorded in the text of the resulting constitution itself.¹⁴ The desired collective will remains a utopia in this historical situation: the reality presents a proliferation of wills instead of one will of the people. Ernesto Laclau theorizes that a modern, hegemonic nation is formed by the double movement of its components: a movement of difference and a movement of sameness.¹⁵ The elements within a signifying chain have to forego their differences and recognize themselves as the same. This sameness is circumscribed by an absolute limit, which separates it from the other beyond this limit, defined as absolute difference. The sameness is not given but, rather, imagined and constructed, and demands an empty signifier that fills the gaps by pointing to the illusory fullness of the community thus consolidated. Any abstraction can serve as such an empty signifier, such as “liberty,” or “progress.” Articulation of differences to an empty signifier makes it possible to imagine a hegemonic relationship and a national community.

The hegemonic discourse of the Bolivian government cannot conceal that its hegemony is only that, after all (a hegemony), and not a utopian representation of the collective will of the whole population. And yet, in

Bolivia in the second decade of the twenty-first century, Arguedas's so-called crazy idea of multiple sovereignties found in *Todas las sangres* does not seem so utopian. Bolivian Vice President Álvaro García Linera and others theorize the possibility of an indigenous autonomy, which implies a local sovereignty of the Aymara, Quechua, or Guaraní community that does not cease to be a part of the Bolivian state, and which also continues holding on to its own sovereign right.¹⁶ The Constituent Assembly approved the proposal of the indigenous autonomies as a part of the Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia (Plurinational State of Bolivia),¹⁷ the new name with which Bolivia has rebaptized itself. This second revolutionary baptism recognizes as nations the different indigenous peoples that live on Bolivian territory and grants them historical and cultural recognition and rights. The new name of the country also marks a divorce from the legacy of the old Republic of Bolivia, established as a nation in 1825 after the Wars of Independence, which was blind to the possibility of someone being an Indian and a citizen of a modern nation simultaneously. In his analysis of the new constitution, the scholar Xavier Albó explains the peculiar phrasing of the concept of political subjectivity of the majority of Bolivians as “naciones y pueblos indígena originario campesinos” (indigenous original peasant nations and peoples). This concept, despite its lack of elegance from a professional jurist's point of view, gathers the autodenominations of the indigenous legislators who were working on the new *Carta Magna* side-by-side with professional lawyers.¹⁸ The term emphasizes both ethnic and class adscription of these political subjects, thus bridging the gap that seemed unbridgeable in the discussion between Arguedas and the sociologists in the 1960s. As we have seen, José María Arguedas in the mid-twentieth century was forwarding this strong idea and was not understood by his contemporaries. But now, the contradiction that inspired Arguedas to think about suicide is a constitutional reality, albeit not in his beloved Peru, where we observe more timid advances in terms of indigenous rights.

I must address here, however briefly, this curious phenomenon. The Peruvian intellectuals of the twentieth century, such as José Carlos Mariátegui and Arguedas, and in the later decades Alberto Flores Galindo, Antonio Cornejo Polar, Nelson Manrique, and Gonzalo Portocarrero, have produced a brilliant corpus of historical, fictional, critical, and theoretical writing on the social reality of Peru and its indigenous population. Their texts abound in progressive, innovative insights useful for understanding a heterogeneous society of an Andean country, such as Peru or Bolivia. But in terms of constitutional implementation of these ideas, the Bolivian situation is quite different from that of Peru in 2013, which did not aim at a constitutional reform. In the Peruvian election of 2011, Ollanta Humala won,

defeating a legacy of dictatorship associated with the Fujimori family; and although Gonzalo Portocarrero pointed out in June 2013 the political and economic improvements that Humala's government made, the Peruvian president's discourses were far from García Linera's radical propositions on the emancipatory power of twenty-first-century Indianism.¹⁹ A Peruvian scholar, Marco Antonio Huaco testifies specifically on the case of the indigenous rights violations by the Peruvian state in the Amazonas Department, where the gold mining is harming the livelihood of the Awajun and Wampis indigenous peoples. In this situation, Huaco speaks of the "neoliberal anti-indigenous program" of the Peruvian state.²⁰ The situation in Bagua, the center of the conflict between the indigenous people and the state-backed mining companies, was especially conflictive and resulted in a massacre of the Awajun by the military police on June 5, 2009. Huaco underlines "the impunity of the political violence, which comes back, *this time* exclusively against the indigenous people."²¹ Investigations were made, but the state officials covered up the military massacre, and the official discourse presented the indigenous protesters as the guilty party.²² Why is there this continuation of a vicious circle of Peruvian politics that seems incapable and unwilling to step outside the confrontation between the Indians and the state? Bruno Bosteels offers a possible answer to this question, while speaking of "an obvious interruption of memory due to military coups and the catastrophe of neoliberalism."²³ Carlos Vilas and Richard Stoller diagnose, more concretely and putting the finger directly into the wound, that "the war between the Sendero Luminoso and the Peruvian State throughout the 1980s can be seen as a struggle between two poles of power for political-military control of disputed territory, with both sides' strategies based upon unusual levels of violence. Insurgency and counterinsurgency alike destroyed communities and forced inhabitants to take part in atrocities or to keep silent." They proceed to quote a United Nations mission report from 1991 that states, bleakly, that as a result of the atrocities, "the countryside, and to a lesser extent urban areas, presents . . . a panorama of conflictive destructuring of the socioeconomic realm."²⁴ Most certainly and sadly, one of the reasons for the lack of institutional or legal advance in Peru is the political violence of the 1980s, evoked obliquely by Huaco in his description of the Bagua situation, when he speaks about "this time," which refers to "that other time," when all the country was sunk in a bloodbath. Leftist politics are associated with terrible violence, just as is the neoliberal Right, and the population is too weary to commit to a program of significant change, afraid of the possibility of more violence.

It is not that in Bolivia there was no military dictatorship or neoliberal catastrophe. It is not even that the government of Evo Morales and García

Linera does not enter into conflict with the multiple indigenous groups that live on Bolivian territory, each one of them with their own interests, and forming the new oppositional pole in relation to the new Bolivian state. The conflict that has unfolded since 2010 between the Bolivian government and the Yuracaré community over the roads project through the lands of the Yuracaré Indians in TIPNIS (Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro-Secure) is an example of the political alignments always being contingent upon the alignments of power. The final decision to build the road despite the opposition of the eco-indigenist groups has earned Evo Morales an accusation of betrayal to his previous alliances; and yet García Linera sees even in this clash between the internal geopolitics and eco-indigenist arguments that these “creative tensions” contribute to the development of the new Bolivia.²⁵

Moreover, García Linera, the ex-prisoner of a neoliberal government of the 1990s, is leading Bolivia as a second to the ex-coca farmer activist Morales. As a result of the symbolic presence of these two figures at the head of the country, the historical moments of repression, both of “long duration” and from the very recent history, are not hidden but evoked as a negative example. For instance, we see it in the film about the youth of Evo Morales, titled *Cocalero*,²⁶ which narrates the extreme violence that the coca farmers suffered at the hands of the repressive neoliberal state. In order to understand the meaning of these evocations, it is useful to turn to Slavoj Žižek’s reflection about the ethical attitude of today’s thinkers on the matter of the Jewish Holocaust. For Žižek, as for many others, it is, of course, unethical and “disgusting” to forget, or to deny this profoundly tragic event of European and world history.²⁷ What is paradoxically even less ethical is a legal declaration that prohibits one from questioning the facts of the Holocaust, because such a “legalized” official memory exempts individuals from reflecting on the event and becomes another perverse form of oblivion. It especially becomes perverse when the reference to the Holocaust justifies violence in the name of so-called Western values. The Slovenian philosopher tells us that the only acceptable and necessary manner of dealing with the fact that the Holocaust did take place in the modern history of Europe is to evoke it as a negative example, as if saying: this is what was done to the Jewish people; let it never happen to anyone else, ever again.

In Peru and Bolivia, in order to start thinking about the new possibilities of including the indigenous communities and individuals into the political fabric of the modern nation-state, one must negatively evoke the American indigenous Holocaust. Before thinking about the possibility of the pluricultural community, Bolivian intellectuals (García Linera, Luís

Tapia, Oscar Vega Camacho, Pablo Stefanoni, among others) recapitulate on the especially painful moments of history when the state massacred its people, whether they are conceptualized as Indians, campesinos (peasants), or *obreros* (workers). Essays on the 1990 Miners' March for Life (Marcha Minera por la Vida), the War of Water (Guerra del Agua) of 2000, and Bloody October (2003) proliferate in the La Paz publishing house Muela del Diablo. To begin to think of a new kind of national and yet multisocietal community, it seems that first it is necessary to exorcise the demons, to recall the moments of acute antagonism, to remember the victims of those clashes, and to mourn them. For the same reasons, in Arguedas's novels the representation of antagonisms and their deadly outcome plays as much of a vital role as negotiation. The moment of hard self-adscription to an identity is as important as the flexible management of ethnic labels. Moments when characters decide to die for a cause are key to understanding Arguedean thought. I am thinking of the characters of Rendón Willka and Anto, whose deaths in *Todas las sangres* are most ideologically conscious.²⁸ Anto and Rendón can certainly negotiate the identity they present on the outside: as an example, Anto passes from being a *pongo* (serf) to *vecino* (townsman) to mestizo. Rendón appears as *indio* or cholo or *ex-indio* or mestizo. But both die for something nonnegotiable, beyond their self-labeling.

Arguedas's novels have been generally considered from the point of view of identity criticism, emphasizing the culturally malleable, negotiable identities of the characters.²⁹ These readings revealed, importantly, the real heterogeneity against the previous scholarly desires of imagining Peru as free of postcolonial fissures. Standing in opposition to homogenizing discourses, Arguedas's novels have been of interest to this tendency in identity criticism. But I want to emphasize again that they are also important for identity politics, in other words, for strategic self-adscription to a discriminated ethnic group with the purpose of defending its ground in an open antagonism with the state. The invention of such an identity can work as a location from which to place a demand on the state, but it can also work in order to mark the ultimate political division into friends and enemies, according to Carl Schmitt's theory, if the state is unable or unwilling to receive such a demand.³⁰ This ultimate political moment occurs at the end of *Todas las sangres*: when the negotiation fails, the soldiers, representatives of the state, shoot Rendón Willka, and the indigenous communities all over the sierra rise in a general rebellion, *yawar mayu*. It is certainly important to see that in Arguedas's last novels identities are fluid, constructed, negotiated, and changing, as Melissa Moore demonstrates. But it is also important to see the moments when the constructed nature

of these identities becomes irrelevant, as it deals with the question of life and death. True, within the novel they are only fictitious deaths of the characters. But these novelistic deaths reflect real deaths that happened because of persons taking a stand with a certain reduced, essential political identity at a certain decisive moment.

The relevance of Arguedean fiction to the understanding of such a political moment can be further advanced with a brief example of a passage that we will analyze in detail in one of the following chapters. Let us hear Rendón Willka's last words before his execution: "Our heart is made of fire. Here and everywhere! We have come to know fatherland, at last. And you will not kill fatherland, sir."³¹ This enigmatic claim that the Indians ("we") "have come to know the fatherland at last" puts into play categories that escape either culturalist or economicist theoretical tools. Here we are talking fundamentally about the possibility (or not) of being a citizen, while participating in a cultural-economic way of life of the Indian communities, their particular subjectivities and their modes of political existence. This is a properly political question. Is it possible for the people who carry on the way of life determined by communal values and systems of production, functional within a separate sovereignty, to establish a satisfactory relation with the state, which pretends to hold the monopoly on sovereignty and violence? Rendón Willka's words respond positively to this question, but his physical death makes this relation problematic. This book will engage this problem and will attempt to respond to the question: How is it that the Indians come to know the "fatherland," if they continue to stand in front of the firing squad, without trial? And how is it possible at all to narrate a relation of this nature; how is it possible to write a novel about a community thus constituted?

In particular, Arguedas's last two novels, *Todas las sangres* (1964) and *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* (1971), address the question of whether the modern democratic nation-state is the best model of political organization for a community, and more so in a world of increased globalization. Because of this radical ideological content, both books received a mixed response upon their publication, and only in the 1970s began to be recognized for their literary and theoretical innovation.³² And yet, the power of these narratives resides precisely in this radical content. In fact, the creative task of the poesis, understood as the power of creation, and that of theory coexist in Arguedean fiction. It is symptomatic and revealing that the speech of the characters in *The Foxes* had once been dismissed as incomprehensible by Mario Vargas Llosa.³³ Arguedas writes in a language that juggles a representativity required of realist literature and also creates, in an infernal battle with the language, new words and expres-

sions that acquire a conceptual and theoretical dimension. Estelle Tarica, for instance, studied the complex meaning of an expression Arguedas uses, “decir limpio” (clean speech), a concept of writing that expresses the essence of things and can only function when the enunciator is “clean” from negative passions, such as rage or resentment.³⁴ As Frederic Jameson suggests in his reflection “On Jargon,” both political theory and poetry call for a language that is removed from the transparency of common sense and everyday speech. In Arguedas’s case, both of these modalities of enunciation, theory and poetical prose, imply an intellectual battle with language and concepts, in other words, the immense effort of thinking and creating a new way of seeing and representing the world. Therefore, a text that has both a theoretical and a poetic aim, as is the case with Arguedean fiction, is often obscure and comes to speak of the kernel of the problem only obliquely. Additionally, Sara Castro-Klarén observes that the power of Arguedas’s fiction lies in the creative process itself, conceptualized in *The Foxes* through the Quechua concept of *camac*, the creative power of the *huacas*.³⁵ The necessity to conjugate the creative poesis and theory is the key reason why Arguedas, a trained anthropologist, turns primarily to fiction in order to represent the Peruvian reality “as he has lived it”³⁶ and to develop a conceptual system that allows him to think of future alternatives for the political and cultural life of Peru. The reason why the present study is primarily concerned with his novels is precisely because this novelistic mode of enunciation illuminates, creatively, the concepts from the sphere of political thought and political practice. But how does this difficult fiction acquire the dimension of a creative and theoretical reflection?

The poesis in Arguedas works in a twofold manner. First, language is certainly one of the battlegrounds where the Quechua-Spanish cultural and conceptual encounters occur. The textual analyses in the present study explore the theoretical fertility of the language gap between Spanish and Quechua. When the indigenous characters in the novels, such as Rendón Willka, speak, they do so in Quechua-sounding Spanish. Arguedas invents a new language for these characters, where simple words, like “sadness” or “rage,” become laden with new political meanings. New terminology to speak about community and about oneself as a subject emerges in this invented speech, as it becomes one of the sites where the new concepts materialize. For instance, when Arguedas uses such a simple adjective as “*triste*” (sad) to describe a miner, this word acquires the meaning of “a worker alienated from the modes of production” whose nonbelonging to a community deprives him of a possibility of effective resistance to exploitation.³⁷ The Arguedean expression condenses the semantic richness of the Quechua word “*khuyay*” (sadness)

in Spanish translation (*triste*) and the political content of Marxist preoccupation with alienation of the working class.

Second, the last two novels, *Todas las sangres* and *The Foxes*, subvert the form of the novel through the irruption of the Quechua narrative modality, as Martin Lienhard has shown in his seminal study of *The Foxes*, and as Arguedas's personal friend, the sociologist Nelson Osorio, testifies in the documentary *Arguedas, hermano compañero, compañero de sangre*. *The Foxes* simply does not follow the rules in terms of construction of characters, narrator, or plot. But, as Horacio Legrás observes, the characters of the previous and supposedly more classical novel *Todas las sangres* are problematic as well since the reader often does not understand the motivations for their actions.³⁸ Their extreme independence from the narrative voice implies that the narrator almost disappears from this novel, letting the characters speak freely and embody their ideological standpoints. In *The Foxes*, the narrative voice disappears altogether and divorces itself from the *relato* (storyline); it emigrates into the diaries that intercalate chapters where the dwellers of Chimbote narrate their story.³⁹ The result of these subversions of the novelistic form is what Antonio Cornejo Polar calls, when speaking about *Todas las sangres*, a "choral novel."⁴⁰ Similarly, Martin Lienhard reminds us how useful it is to read Arguedas's fiction with the tools offered by the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin, especially his idea of a dialogical novel.⁴¹ In such a novel, it is impossible to deduce the ideological position of the narrator because the characters dialogue freely and each character voices a different ideological standpoint and different way of seeing the world. This dialogical form and the ideological multiplicity it implies is brought to an apex in Arguedas's last novels, as Cornejo and Legrás show. The result is a space where the enunciations of different standpoints proliferate, allowing for different expressions of concepts to take place.

In *Todas las sangres*, the dialectic movement of the narrative strives to put the characters with different ways of seeing the world into dialogue with one another, and such is the case for the indigenous leader Rendón Willka and the industrialist Don Fermín.⁴² This dialogue betrays the intention of the novel to find a common ground and to reach a certain degree of representativity of the national reality. The dialogues in *Todas las sangres* stage the desired negotiations between the contending parties. The negativity emerges, nonetheless, as the novel finishes not with a negotiation but with the execution of the hero, Rendón Willka, by the military police. Contrary to what happens in *Todas las sangres*, in *The Foxes* the characters hardly dialogue, as the imperative search for negotiation, common ground, or a social contract ceases to be central to this text. For instance,

at the beginning of *The Foxes*, mad Moncada preaches at the marketplace, voicing publicly his version of the sociopolitical present and future of Peru and Chimbote.⁴³ The reader is privy only to some disparate responses to his preaching, which come from transitory characters, which never again reappear in the novel. Moncada's speech is a proclamation more than a dialogue. In the absence of the possibility of any kind of articulation, in *The Foxes*, as Horacio Legrás concludes, the recognition as a possibility finds its limits, both aesthetic and political. Thus, the questioning, advanced in *Todas las sangres*, of the modern nation-state and of modern democracy reaches its extreme phase in *The Foxes*.

This critique is not purely negative, however, and Arguedean fiction offers partial, at times tragic but functional models to follow, both for the task of emerging as a responsible political subject and for the task of creating a community. The radical attitude of finitude is the defining quality of such characters as Rendón Willka of *Todas las sangres* and Bazalár of *The Foxes*; this attitude is the key for the emergence of a political subject into which Arguedas deposits his hopes for the future. This attitude that transpires in Arguedean fiction is akin to Jean-Luc Nancy's elaboration on the importance of finitude-attitude, and to Jacques Derrida's theorization on "radical atheism that denies the desirability of the transcendent and situates all value in what is mortal and passes away."⁴⁴ A lax community, akin to Hardt, Negri, and Virno's idea of multitude is formed on the basis of the subjectivities that emerge from this tragic and honest finitude-attitude. The convergence of this community is based on solidarity, unhinged from any hope for a transcendent whole that somehow would compensate the suffering of earthly existence.

Since 2003, and in the light of Arguedas's centenary in January 2011, there has been a renewed interdisciplinary interest in his work.⁴⁵ For instance, in the special issue of *Revista de Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* in January 2011, William Rowe and Martin Lienhard renewed the discussion on the subversive, revolutionary nature of *The Foxes*. At the Congress organized by the Universidad Católica in Lima in 2011, many prominent scholars spoke of the present applicability of the author's work and ideas. Importantly, Estelle Tarica spoke of the practical use of Arguedas for the Peruvian Commission for Reconciliation as a reference for the committee's task of working through the reconciliation process of post-terrorist Peru, trying to recover from the trauma of 80,000 deaths caused by the Shining Path and military violence.⁴⁶ Gustavo Gutierrez, similarly, specifically addressed the question of Arguedas's presence beyond his death and beyond academia, as a conceptual inspiration for young people to continue their reflections on the possibilities of emancipatory thinking, speaking,

and acting.⁴⁷ These scholarly contributions inform my study and serve me as a model because they are deeply rooted in careful textual analysis and make use of tools offered by literary criticism, while at the same time produce ideas that go beyond the sphere of literary or academic reflection.

This book enters into debate with both canonical and recent criticism on Arguedas, namely, the works of Angel Rama, Antonio Cornejo-Polar, Martin Lienhard, Horacio Legrás, and Estelle Tarica, among others. All these studies appreciate the faithfulness of the Arguedean fictional account to the profound truth of the Andean reality. Taking an almost scientific approach to Arguedas's social novels, they suggest that Arguedean fiction demands an interdisciplinary approach. My reading rejects Angel Rama's promise of successful transculturation in Arguedas's novels; instead, the multiplicity of political subjectivities that are analyzed in what follows is better understood through Cornejo-Polar's concept of heterogeneity. The continuing relevance on Arguedas's work as ethnographer, novelist, and public figure, as evinced by the recent publication of his complete anthropological works in Peru and continuing publications about his work, has been a driving force behind my research.⁴⁸ Furthermore, this book establishes a dialogue with the theory of postcoloniality and subalternity proposed by the Indian Subaltern Studies Group and its Latin Americanist counterparts.⁴⁹ Contesting the unfortunate perception that theory can only be produced at the "center," Arguedas's literary and essayistic production is evidence of important theoretical thought produced on the "periphery," namely, in the Andes. In this manner, and theoretically, this book proposes a dialogue between theory and anthropology produced in the Andes and the European philosophical tradition. In short, the book works through the following three tasks: to offer a new reading of Arguedas's fiction; to revise the idea of how a creative and theoretical thought is produced; and to elaborate and sharpen a number of specific concepts from political theory in an Andean context and beyond, putting Arguedean theorizations in the framework of political thought from the twentieth and the twenty-first century.

In order to understand the locus of enunciation from which Arguedas produces his political thought, I turn to studies in Andean anthropology and history—for example, the work of Gary Urton, Frank Salomon, Peter Klarén, and Arguedas himself, among others.⁵⁰ The anthropological accounts illuminate the frequently obscure enunciations in the novels, written in Quechua-influenced Spanish and involving the Andean cosmological or religious concepts. For instance, the second chapter of my book demonstrates that the relationship of an individual to their death is essential for their self-definition as a subject of a community. In this case, I turn

to anthropology in order to shed light on the often oblique language used by Indian characters to speak about their vision of afterlife; thus, I hone in on the concept of finitude, proposed by Nancy and further elaborated here, as a key to understanding the Andean proposal on community and political subjectivity.

Although this book is fundamentally a work of literary analysis, history also offers fundamental background support for this study. The reader will need to keep in mind certain pivotal moments of the development of the Peruvian state, as he or she explores the problems addressed in the analysis of the novels.

Frustrated Ideals and Attempts at Homogenization

In a recent blog entry analyzing pitfalls of Ollanta Humala's presidency, the sociologist Gonzalo Portocarrero writes: "El gran problema de la sociedad peruana es la brecha entre las leyes y las costumbres, la escasa vigencia de la ley y la debilidad de las instituciones" (The great problem of Peruvian society is the gap between the laws and customs, the scarce presence of the law and frailty of the institutions).⁵¹ This is one of the central problems addressed in the following chapters.

After the Wars of Independence (1810–25), the liberators and legislators such as Simón Bolívar wished for laws that would overcome the differences created by the dual colonial regimes of the "republic of Indians" and the "republic of Spaniards." Nonetheless, the liberators were inspired by the European ideas of nationhood and citizenship, based on ideology of the liberal subject, a citizen whose recognizable features are provided by property ownership and literacy. Bolívar's ideas were divorced from the Peruvian reality, where the majority of the population was indigenous and did not fulfill any of the classical citizenship requirements.⁵² Consequently, despite the liberal nature of the first constitutional text of 1823, the colonial division was reinstated and played a major part in dealings between the state and the peasant communities. For example, the colonial indigenous tribute (*tributo*) was rebaptized as an indigenous contribution (*contribución indígena*) and was reinstated in 1826.⁵³ Bolívar's dream was a republic without Indians as a separate cultural element. It was a dream that had very real pernicious results for many indigenous persons as their communities were legally abolished in order to homogenize the population and make the Indians available to be subsumed into the nation. But despite the legal abolition of the *ayllus*, the homogenization did not occur. In this new situation, the indigenous people ceased to be subjected to the colonial

state, but they did not become citizens of the republic as they were not granted equal status with members of other socioeconomic groups. The relations of production remained semifeudal. As a corollary to this situation, the political liberal equation of “one person equals one vote” never became functional because the vast majority of Indians remained Quechua monolinguals, who did not read or write in Spanish, and the nation-state could not imagine having more than one official language or to incorporate orality as part of voting practices. The indigenous peoples’ social subjectivity remained in a shady area of subalternity, neither inside nor outside the political horizon of the state.

Politically, the Indians continued to be an element foreign to the creole nation, and they also were perceived as such by creole ideology. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, when Peru lost the War of the Pacific (1879–84), the defeat was blamed on “too many Indians” populating its territory.⁵⁴ The racist discourse grew stronger over time,⁵⁵ ideologically separating the country and its people by regional, ethnic, and class categories, where the coast was associated with the elites and the Spanish heritage while the Andean sierra was stereotypically equated with the exploited and culturally and linguistically distinct Quechua population. In Flores Galindo’s vivid example, in the Peruvian army the esprit de corps was nonexistent because the soldiers were mostly Indians and mestizos recruited by force, while the officials came from the newly formed Lima aristocracy and had nothing in common with their men, not even language.⁵⁶ In this situation, a national consensus was impossible because there was no means of communication on the level of language, ideology, or customs between urban elite and middle class, on one hand, and the indigenous peasants on the other.⁵⁷ As a result, the model of hegemony, based on consensus and communication, was not working for Peru, as we learn from narratives like Flores Galindo’s or *Todas las sangres*. What becomes evident as we read the novel is that a colonial model of nation building, which conceptualizes the articulation of a national body and soul as a result of imposed practices, does not seem to work for Peru, either. Neither consensus nor repression can cancel out the heterogeneity of the social texture.

The historical truth is that indigenous peasants could not overcome segregation even after their participation as so-called citizen-soldiers in the War of the Pacific. As Florencia Mallon tells us, although the Junín peasants fought against Chilean invasion under Mariscal Cáceres and claimed citizenship rights at the end of the war, they were called “bandits” and stayed as they were before the war—unincorporated into the nation. The Lima elite did not see themselves united with the Andean population—neither by the category “Peruvian,” nor by any other category. Dis-

dain and fear, as opposed to consensus, marked the attitudes of the Peruvians of different classes, ethnic groups, and regions toward one another.

This socioeconomic, cultural, ideological, and ethnic gap was not bridged during the twentieth century. The populist governments of the 1920s and 1930s proposed to negotiate these internal differences and forged an alliance with the radical middle-class sector, which sympathized with the cause of the Indian peasantry. The government took up an official *indigenismo* ideology, and the constitution of 1920 recognized Indian ayllus and created a government institution where the Indians could legally claim their land titles.⁵⁸ Augusto Leguía's reformist government (1919–30) tried to curtail the local power of the *gamonales* (landlords), making the state more present in the provinces. This encouraged indigenous peasants' mobilization in defense of their interests. The autonomy of these mobilizations alarmed the central government and soon it retreated from its pro-Indian policies and anti-gamonal actions, repressing the Indian movement. The rule of the gamonales returned to the provinces and remained largely uncontested until the 1950s, the decade in which the action of *Todas las sangres* begins. This pattern will occur repeatedly during the twentieth century, such as in the government of Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1963–68), which professed populist rhetoric and subsequently harshly repressed Hugo Blanco's uprising at La Convención.⁵⁹ Even as late as 1990, Carlos Iván Degregori underlines the strong presence of the *gamonalismo* legacy in the sierra when he analyzes Sendero Luminoso's relative success in securing the peasants' support in the Andes in the 1980s. According to Degregori, Sendero Luminoso appeared as a "new patrón, hard and unflexible but 'just.'"⁶⁰

This situation was further aggravated by the actual exclusion of the indigenous population from the democratic rituals. Although the repeated suffrage reforms of the nineteenth century theoretically included all persons of legal age into the voting practice, it did not substantially influence the inclusion of the Indian peasant population. The vote was open and public, and the local authorities manipulated the peasants unabashedly until the 1930s.⁶¹ The rhetoric of official *indigenista* ideology persisted among Lima intellectuals, but it was far from effective in changing the reality of the remote highlands.

In the mid-1960s, the Peruvian state was forced to consolidate at all costs its national imagery, and we begin to see the realization, however problematic, of hegemony in Peru. Or was it a bloody imposition of state domination on reality, which refused to obey theory? Although the internal contradictions of Peruvian society did not diminish, the increasing presence of external forces produced the need to recognize Peru's unity

despite the differences within the country. The increasingly popular mobilization expressed in the labor and peasant movements announced the now undeniable political presence of the Quechua and Aymara Indians. The consolidation of civil society was brought about by internal migrations and an increased urban population along with a boom in literacy and the university student population, which now included working-class students and recent migrants from the highlands. In the year 1965, the Shining Path appears on the scene and the Peruvian military effects the first bloody repression of highland guerrilla movements. José María Arguedas publishes *Todas las sangres* the year before, in 1964. The national imagery might have been consolidated; it might have opposed the imperialist encroachments; but the imagined homogeneity of the nation was still a utopia. Historically, the Peruvian flag that the peasants waved as they occupied the lands of the hacendados⁶² is evidence that they had some idea of the power of national rhetoric and the legitimacy it offered. But it did not protect them from bullets when the hacendados accused them of disrupting the peace, also in the name of the nation.

In *Todas las sangres*, the use of the national imagery by the Indians marks the gap between the ideal of the inclusive nation and the violent reality. Although the Peruvian flag does not serve as an effective shield against bullets, the Indians keep hanging on to it.⁶³ We also see the centrality of the Peruvian flag as a symbol in the words of an old Indian mayor, after the *subprefecto*⁶⁴ arbitrarily attacks and wounds him: “The wound does not matter. . . . Other thing matter [*sic*], *subprefecto*. I, Indian mayor, elementary school third grade. We the community Indians will be respect [*sic*]. We will know how to read. The community Indians, we are so, so many. With the Peruvian flag we will firmly stand.”⁶⁵ In this quote, the indigenous mayor uses a reference to the national flag, the embodiment of the idea of the nation, to oppose the physical violence exercised by a representative of the actual Peruvian state. Using Quechua-influenced, tortuous Spanish, the Indian constructs a sort of chain of equivalences between the *comuneros*, community Indians, their capacity to read and *ser respetado* (literally, “be respected”), and the Peruvian flag. We might say that in this speech the representative of the ayllu declares one of the main facets of Arguedas’s proposal for the future of the Peruvian nation. The *comuneros* should be citizens because they are the majority, “so, so many”; they are the physical bodies that compose the nation; they will learn how to read and make political decisions; they will be Peruvians. But they will not shed their cultural specificity and will not abandon their status as *comuneros*, Indians organized in an ayllu. In an oblique reference to the Indians’ exclu-

sion from the rituals of democracy in the nineteenth-century constitutions, the capacity to read is underlined here as a passageway to citizenship, but it does not mark the erasure of indigenouslyness. Furthermore, in the reverent words of the old Indian, the reference to national imagery overrides the arbitrary violence of the state's servant, from which he just suffered. In other words, this statement saves the idea of the nation despite the reader having just witnessed the corrupt face of the state apparatus, which works and wages this arbitrary violence, paradoxically, also in the name of the nation. Nonetheless, this proposal of a literate Indian who is still an Indian contradicted the mainstream progressive Peruvian thought of the 1960s.

The Peruvian social sciences discourse of the time shared an important point with Simón Bolívar's ideas: it hinged on the idea of necessary homogenization for successful execution of any nation-building project. The idea was to eliminate Indian comuneros, not as living persons but as a culturally separate social group, a heterogeneous element. Within this logic, the Indians necessarily cease to be Indians once they learn how to write and begin to participate in the political life of the country. In the context of this ideological horizon, the scandal of the indigenous mayor's declaration is that it asserts that the Indians can simultaneously keep their loyalty to the indigenous community and also acquire recognition as citizens. This simultaneity, as we will see, is the original kernel of Arguedas's political thought: the categories, which would appear mutually exclusive, are shown to be compatible, however problematically, in the reality reflected in *Todas las sangres*.

Arguedas, for his part, claimed that "the contradictions [represented in the novel] are those that naturally exist in our country, the *different ways of seeing the world*. The great ambition of my book was, precisely, to show this multiplicity of conceptions, according to the degrees of proximity to the world in fury."⁶⁶ The novel's goal is to theorize the simultaneity of being a literate Indian-Peruvian, which we saw illustrated in the old Indian mayor's discourse. In this proposal, the Peruvian flag does not protect the Indians, and yet, paradoxically, it remains a symbol of promise for the future of cooperation between two heterogeneous modes of collectivity: the ayllu and the nation.

We could say that the seed of disagreement at the roundtable event is found in the different readings by Arguedas and the social scientists of cultural codes. As a consequence, the category of the political is understood differently by the debating theorists, which makes a dialogue about political reality and its representation almost impossible. For Arguedas, cultural and historical factors determined the people's behavior, even more

so than economic factors. Culture, or what Arguedas calls “the way of seeing the world,” was the foremost political dimension of human actions on individual and social levels. On the contrary, Quijano’s and Favre’s classically narrow concepts of the political prevented them from seeing the profoundly political dimension of some of the aspects of Arguedas’s novel. Consequently, the text was read as politically irresponsible, as an escapist and false representation of reality—in a nutshell, a reactionary vision. However, in *Todas las sangres* we note the same “widening of the borders of the political”⁶⁷ that Horacio Legrás observes in Arguedas’s earlier novel, *Yawar fiesta*. In this interpretation, the articulation of the impossibility for the cultural aspects to be absorbed by hegemonic politics does not mean an apolitical reading but, rather, signals the opening of the sphere of the political,⁶⁸ which lies at the heart of the Arguedean revision of the concept of the political itself.

In a reflection on the Bolivian War of Water, or Guerra del Agua, the Bolivian sociologist and current vice president Álvaro García Linera observes the same effect of the widening of the political field. This time around it occurs not in a textual universe but in the reality of the political action on the streets of the city of Cochabamba in the year 2000. The following extensive quote, written in combative and metaphorical language, demonstrates the real political implications of such an amplification of the political field:

Against the extension of the spaces of the capitalist exploitation or the desert of expropriation, arose a high tide of new politics of the vital necessities, around which the people not only organized to dispute the conditions of survival, reproduction, and even [the processes of] production in rural areas, but also *the recomposition of the political life*. The high tide has *modified the borders of the political*. *The spaces of the political have widened and extended*, at the same time as this movement leaves empty a series of political institutions, such as the party system. The plebeian politics has overflowed the liberal spaces, where the people are no more, and only are said to be represented [or present].⁶⁹

The widening of the field of the political is contingent upon the emergence of what García Linera calls the “multitude form” of the popular organization, which opposed the Bolivian state’s pretensions to sovereignty through hegemonic politics mixed with plain exercise of force. Political philosophers Negri, Agamben, and Virno,⁷⁰ from whom García Linera borrows the term, elaborate upon the concept of multitude as a collectivity that

cannot be described as a people that is constituted as such through their fundamental relation to the nation. In what follows, I will engage this concept to understand the representation of Peruvian reality in *Todas las sangres*, which widens the field of the political in its description of collectivities that are far from coming together as a homogeneous “people.”