

Introduction

In analyzing the work of Arguedas and Vargas Llosa, I have not attempted to address comprehensively the properly literary aspects of their texts but rather to interpret them as a cultural gesture and an ideological *performance* whose characteristics and meaning are inseparable from the historical, social, and political contexts that correspond to the distinct stages of their production as literature. At the same time, I have been attentive to the representational strategies that each author sets in motion in order to penetrate the intricate labyrinths of Andean culture and also, in Vargas Llosa's case, of the variety of settings over which the flight of his imagination and technique unfolds. Few authors from the same country and the same era are in fact more disparate than those with whom the following pages are concerned. At the same time, this disparity leads to significant intersections and even convergences that are worth analyzing as alternative paths by which one can approach the social and ideological problematic of our time.

My project has been to address both José María Arguedas's fragmented, uncompleted work and Mario Vargas Llosa's triumphant poetics starting from the questions that the most recent cultural theory allows us to formulate around issues such as the construction of subjectivity, the representation of affects, and the relations between aesthetics and ideology and the biopolitical dimension that it reveals, in a decisively influential way, in Latin American symbolic production. I have also elaborated on the relation between the weakened category of national culture and

the emergence of global frameworks, between culture and the market, and between language, identity, and representation. It has been essential for me to understand the mode in which anthropology and literary creation are intertwined in the poetic discursivity of both authors and the forms in which each one of them negotiates, in his own way, conflicts of class, ethnicity, and genre in the construction of fiction. My intent has been to pursue meticulously the transformations of both authors' work over the decades, facing the processes of social and political change in the Andean region and, more broadly, in Latin America, without neglecting to consider other phenomena that correspond to the greater context of Western culture: the decreasingly auratic dimension of contemporary literature, the notorious fluctuations of the function of the intellectual with respect to the state, the complex responses to modernization issuing from very diverse politico-ideological horizons, the transnational dynamics that intensified and reconfigured themselves after the end of the Cold War, the always-present intercultural conflict in postcolonial societies, and the symbolic dimension of these struggles which encounter in language their most arduous battlefield.

My objective has been to disentangle the specific forms that each of these writers produce in order to deal with the dilemmas of their time: tradition/modernity, Quechua/Spanish, local/global, socialism/(neo) liberalism, affect and desire/instrumental reason, Western epistemology/local knowledges, and identity/alterity. The emphasis of the present study could not help but fall back, again and again, on the negotiations, ambiguities, and conflicts that characterize the coexistence of diverse epistemologies in the same cultural context and the same era. In a broader sense, to put it in Deleuze and Guattari's terms, the question that motivates the present study can be summarized by asking what the relation is between the literary machine and the war machine, and the love machine and the revolution machine. For me, the principal meaning of the texts I analyze here is based on this relation, and although each reader can answer these questions for himself or herself, the following pages advance hypotheses that can potentially convert these issues into a collective practice.

The notion of the *dilemma* or *double bind* suggested by Gayatri Spivak in her most recent book, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (2012), opens up theoretical paths that certainly have numerous predecessors in the Latin American critical context. The already copious literature on Arguedas and Vargas Llosa was instrumental to my approach to the literary and cultural textualities of both authors, as well as for my

comprehension of their particular spaces of intellectual activity. However, from the perspective that I propose here, properly literary textuality is less relevant than the cultural texture that contains it. But if theoretical references—above all, postcolonial criticism—abound in this study, they are no more important than those which refer to the culture of the Andean region, to its tenacious and painful political, social, and cultural intrahistory, whose alternatives and significations I have only been able to trace here through modest and approximate explorations.

In the Spanish version of this book, two quotations were offered at the beginning of the text. The first is from Homi Bhabha, who asks:

What was modernity for those who were part of its instrumentality or governmentality but, for reasons of race or gender or economic status, were excluded from its norms of rationality, or its prescriptions of progress? What contending and competing discourses of emancipation or equality, what forms of identity and agency, emerge from the “discontents” of modernity? (qtd. in Mitchell, “Translator Translated” 82)

The second passage is from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari:

As an assemblage, a book has only itself, in connection with other assemblages [...] We will never ask what a book means, as signified or signifier; we will not look for anything to understand in it. We will ask what it functions with, in connection with what other things it does or does not transmit intensities [...] A book itself is a little machine; what is the relation (also measurable) of this literary machine to a war machine, love machine, revolutionary machine, etc.—and an abstract machine that sweeps them along? We have been criticized for overquoting literary authors. But when one writes, the only question is which other machine the literary machine can be plugged into, must be plugged into in order to work. (*A Thousand Plateaus* 4)

In my opinion, these passages (which originally appeared as epigraphs) summarize key aspects of the study of the Peruvian cultural field on which this book focuses and provide a form of conceptual orientation for interpreting the subject matter. The first quotation, from Bhabha, problematizes the connections between modernity and rationality, between progress and legitimacy, and focuses on the hierarchies, exclusions, and discriminatory policies that from the beginning accompanied the implementation of modernity, particularly in peripheral societies. At the same

time, Bhabha introjects the element of affect into the interpretation of modern protocols: the idea of “discontent,” the frustration of desire, and the indifference of modernity toward need and inequality. The second passage, from Deleuze and Guattari, introduces, in turn, the notion of the book as a *literary machine* that connects with others for the production of meaning, a process that in no way develops without the articulation of multiple domains. The literary work is understood as a complex system of assemblages that is by nature always fluid, unfinished, and unstable. The essential operation is that of *plugging into*, of producing connections and circuits that “transmit intensities”—not definite meanings, but significant fluxes that constantly defy our expectations and redefine the horizons of rationality, emotion, and imagination. These are the premises that guide the present study, allowing the analysis of these two Peruvian authors to reveal a challenging platform for the exploration of the margins of modernity in Latin America and for the responses that emerge in order to contest the project of modernity from different aesthetic and ideological positions.

The suicide of José María Arguedas and the Nobel Prize bestowed on Mario Vargas Llosa constitute, both separately and in conjunction, a challenge to Latin American thought. The former marks an iconic, historical, and symbolic instance of the development of cultural resistance among the oppressed peoples of the continent since the Conquest and signals the inescapable necessity of political and cultural reflection on the themes of decolonization and the search for *other* forms of modernity for the heterogeneous societies of Latin America. The latter establishes a specific form of cultural and ideological leadership that recognizes in the market, in the integration of Latin America to the West, and in the articulation of the politics of neoliberalism new forms of intellectual triumphalism and cosmopolitanism from which Latin American *difference* is absorbed and resignified in the wide and foreign field of world literature. Together, these events expose the tensions, conflicts, and paradoxes that form the plot of the regional and continental history of Latin America, particularly since the Cuban Revolution. The coexistence of both events—mourning and recognition, tragedy and celebration—marks a crossroads that goes far beyond the field of literature; it also has to do with profound ethical and ideological choices, with very distinct forms of the development of subjectivity, and with the disparate meanings that emerge from both language and silence. Both events, the suicide and the Nobel Prize, themselves constitute a challenge to the country that was the birthplace of some of the most profound poetic, narrative, and essayistic works written in Spanish.

Disappearance and recognition thus present an unavoidable invitation to think the history of the modern nation, its unkept promises, its benefits, and its social cost.

I have always considered Peru to be a source of some of the principal landmarks of Latin American cultural history—from the early texts of Inca Garcilaso, Guamán Poma de Ayala, and Lunarejo, to the brilliant thought of José Carlos Mariátegui, Antonio Cornejo Polar, and Aníbal Quijano, through the fundamental contributions of Gustavo Gutiérrez and Alberto Flores Galindo. These landmarks allow us to read with clarity the persistent and difficult development of critical-theoretical categories and of socio-cultural analysis that, without abandoning dialog with political and philosophical thought from other latitudes or resorting to glorification and fundamentalism, are able to capture Latin American specificity. Although this is an undertaking that takes place in different ways in different regions of Latin America, in my opinion, no country offers, as does Peru, so many conceptual propositions and achievements or such a luxurious and profound panorama of poetic diversity. I have dedicated a good part of my academic effort over the years to the study of some of the authors mentioned above, and I remain convinced that Peru holds many of the keys to comprehending the thorny process leading to the decolonization of thought and the critical understanding of Latin American history. If this book contributes in any way to these objectives, it will have been worth both the effort devoted to its development and the risks that its proposals imply.