

Placing Place: Speech in José María Arguedas' *The Foxes*

Lucas Izquierdo

Latin American & Iberian Studies, University of Richmond, Richmond, USA
Email: lizquier@richmond.edu

Received July 18th, 2013; revised August 23rd, 2013; accepted October 10th, 2013

Copyright © 2013 Lucas Izquierdo. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Critical approximations carried out from the global south entail spatial and epistemological challenges to the hegemony of western modernity. This article argues that José María Arguedas' *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* (1971) produces a language that embodies and transforms an Aristotelian conception of speech. Written in an avant-garde vernacular, the novel congeals a multiplicity of worldviews, utopias, and mercantile discourses that converge in Chimbote-Peru. Guided by Jacques Ranciere's *Disagreement* (1998) and *Dissensus* (2010), the analysis is divided in two stages. The first stage examines the notion of speech and a constitutive *wrong* that establishes a community. The second stage addresses the symbiotic relationship of speech, its place of enunciation, and the conception of an alternate social order. The analysis places Arguedas in *critical dialogue* with Aristotelian speech, Ranciere's notion of wrong, and the emergence or failure of claiming speech in canonical history.

Keywords: Arguedas; Speech; Ranciere; Aristotle; Castro-Klaren; Mignolo

Yo soy torero del Dios, soy mendigo de su cariño, no del cariño falso de las autoridades, de la humanidad también. ¡Miren! (Arguedas, 1992: p. 53)

[I'm God's toreador. I'm a beggar for His affection, not for the false affection of the authorities, of humanity too. Look here! (Arguedas, 2000: p. 56)]

Critical initiatives carried out from the global south entail spatial and epistemological challenges to the hegemony of western modernity. Decolonial enterprises since the sixteenth century have produced "responses to the oppressive and imperial bent of modern European ideals projected to and enacted by, the non-European world" (Mignolo, 2012: p. 3). In a Peruvian context, Sara Castro-Klaren perceives a "liberating potential when engaged in *critical dialogue*, as Mariátegui did with Marxism, and Garcilaso de la Vega, Inca, did earlier with Spanish historiography, for nothing is pristine and autochthonous after contact" (2011: p. 475). In dialogue with the theoretical work of Italian sociologist Vilfredo Pareto and French syndicalist George Sorel, José Carlos Mariátegui's (1894-1930) interpretation of 1920's Peruvian reality accounted for the Mexican Revolution, the 1927 Chinese Crises, the fall of European Empires, and the emergence of capitalist monopolies. Multiple sets of critical epistemologies, for instance, produced his mapping of Peru as a permeable space with "alternating and transformative ruptures and continuities" (Castro-Klaren, 2011: p. 477).

Following the path proposed by Mariátegui's seminal work on Peru's structural inequalities, the literary fiction of ethnographer and author José María Arguedas (1911-1969) traverses Quechua and Spanish vocabulary and syntax to establish places of enunciation to be claimed by emerging political subjects at the periphery of the world market. Viewed from anthropologi-

cal theory, Arguedas' language provides the foundation for two key paradigms of Latin American literary criticism, Angel Rama's concept of *transculturation* and Antonio Cornejo Polar's notion of *cultural heterogeneity* (Rama, 2012; Cornejo Polar, 1992). Writing across cultures, Arguedas' literary genius lies in producing a kaleidoscopic vision of the centuries' old contact between indigenous, African, and European cultural systems that presently converge in the uneven flow of global capitalism.

This article argues that Arguedas' posthumously published novel *The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below* (1971) produces a language that embodies and transforms an Aristotelian conception of speech. Guided by Jacques Ranciere's *Disagreement* (1998) and *Dissensus* (2010), the analysis is divided in two stages. The first stage examines the conception of speech and a constitutive *wrong* that underlies the social and economic hierarchy in *The Foxes*. The second stage addresses the symbiotic relationship of speech, its place of enunciation, and the emergence of an alternate social order. Close readings in each section will engage with historical episodes significant to the acquisition of speech, namely Scythian and Roman, which underscore the interdependence of speech and the place of its inception. The analysis places Arguedas in *critical dialogue* with Aristotle's notion of speech, Ranciere's conception of wrong, and the emergence or failure of claiming speech in canonical history. To regenerate the present and defeat the historical project of modernity Arguedas first assimilated its achievements (Gutiérrez, 2003: p. 14). Decolonizing the logic of western modernity entails that "modernity has to be assumed in both its glories and its crimes" (Mignolo, 2012: p. 5).

Written in an avant-garde vernacular, *The Foxes* congeals a multiplicity of worldviews, utopias, and mercantile discourses

that converge in Chimbote-Peru. The historical Chimbote was in the nineteen forties a fishing hamlet located south of Trujillo. Twenty years later an unrestrained capitalist growth fuelled by a nascent fishing industry attracted thousands of foreign and national migrants. The urban landscape depicted by *The Foxes* results from the social layering produced in Chimbote's forceful economic conversion. The seaport is crammed with markets, paths, and edifices that subsume a multiplicity of oral and written languages, along with ritual practices and cosmologies originating from the Andean regions of Peru.

The Foxes is structured by dialogic interplay of diaries and tales that conceive the systems that configure everyday life. The narrative incorporates the heteroglossia that defines the novel as a cultural form associated with urban living. In Bakhtinian terms "Arguedas' texts are located in and about the combat zone in which all the aspects of daily life are interconnected with the struggle between the Andean cultures and the successive waves of European forms of life and thought" (Castro-Klaren, 2000: p. 308). Neither the Indian nor the European descendant is deemed homogenous and complete but emerge as problematic and unresolved characters living in conditions that far exceed a normative interpretation.

Martin Lienhard notes that *The Foxes* evolves in contact with a plurality of socio-dialects specific to Chimbote's migrants (1992: p. 329). William Rowe addresses the multiplicity of linguistic structures as a variable swarm of discourses and sociolects, from messianic Andean vernaculars to capitalist and corporeal speeches, which are "characterized by disintegrations and extraordinarily fertile interconnections" (2000: p. 285). The discursive swarms transverse Huarochirí cosmologies, revolutionary utopias, and the brute force of capital. Edmundo Gómez Mango suggests that *The Foxes* could be baptized a Babylonian "All Languages [Tongues]" (1992: p. 366—my translation). Adrift in a multitude "each character is essentially a voice that speaks" (1992: p. 366). The novel oscillates from producing panoramic visions of Chimbote to spotlight a migrant worker, fisherman, or prostitute that claims, if only for an ephemeral instant, a place of enunciation.

Martín Oyata cautions us against reading *The Foxes* solely in an ethnographic register. Oyata judiciously observes that an ethnographic-reception of the text by literary critics may be due to *urban* or *foreign* readers' spatial-temporal distance from Andean objects and subjects of representation. While it is undeniable that Arguedas wrote the novel based on prior ethnographic fieldwork, the author himself asserts to have crafted an "artificial language" (Oyata, 2012: p. 45). What concerns this article is how does Arguedas' artificial language produce the effect of witnessing mental operations that conjure a right to speech at the fringes of global capital?

As Virgil guided Dante to the depths of hell, afro-Peruvian Crazy Moncada is a central figure that leads us through Chimbote's apocalyptic labyrinths. Moncada is not our exclusive guide, as human and mythic figures appear in turns to escort us and then abruptly metamorphose and disappear. The complexity of Arguedas' language brings to mind authors such as Guamán Poma, César Vallejo, James Joyce, or John Dos Passos. Analogous to a Shakespearean jester, Crazy Moncada speaks truths that unsettle most city dwellers: "Moncada's well known; nobody bothers him. He's tellin' the truth—that's the way crazy people talk" (Arguedas, 2000: p. 57). Moncada's speech at the Modelo marketplace emerges in the second tale of the novel.

Belaúnde, presidente de la República, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, padre madre de presidentes, senador Kennedy muerto; pobrecito madre de Belaúnde, del General Doige, del Almirante Zamoras, del Perú América. ¡Yo, yo, yo! Se acuerdan de la peste bubónica que salió de Talara-Tumbes? Yo soy esa pestilencia, aquí estoy sudando la bubónica de Talara-Tumbes International Petroleum Company, Esso, Lobitos, libra esterlina, dólar (Arguedas, 1992: p. 54).

[Belaúnde, president of the Republic, Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, father mother of presidents, dead Senator Kennedy; poor little man mother of Belaúnde, of General Doige, of Almirante Zamoras, of Perú América. Me, me, me! Do you remember the bubonic plague that came out of Talara-Tumbes? I am that plague, and here I am sweating out the bubonic plague of Talara-Tumbes International Petroleum Company, Esso, Lobitos, pound sterling, dollar (Arguedas, 2000: p. 57)].

Moncada's initial utterance speaks of past and present Peruvian dignitaries and dead US senator Kennedy (whom to a lesser degree than Haya de la Torre signifies a leftist political tradition). The utterance produces a collage of personal names punctuated by a place called "Peru-America". The last utterance in contrast summons a transnational petroleum corporation and monetary nomenclature. Petrol is unmistakably a key energy resource that nourishes the development of our modern world, and Moncada references the fuel that springs from Talara-Tumbes as a plague. His speech is metaphorically aligned with the fuel, the speech is that plague, and cannibalizes the political and commercial forces responsible for the uneven economic development of the seaport. In the midst of these clusters a startling event occurs, Moncada claims a place of enunciation "Me, me, me". The first person interjection noticeably emerges in-between established discourses as struggling to capture a place that belonged to none. The self-referential pronoun is an energy source that, as the petroleum, plagues the place it inhabits.

The right to speech is central to Arguedas' literary fiction. In earlier novels such as *Yawar Fiesta* (1941) or *Todas las sangres* (1964) and short stories such as *El sueño del pongo* (1965), Arguedas examines the social order of Andean communities. The texts partly reflect on semi-feudal protocols of domination that give reason for the exploitation of the workforce in the Andean region. From the perspective of the landowners, the oppressed do not possess speech and must battle for the right to establish an alternate communal logos. Arguedas' writing across cultures, as Mariátegui years' prior, was unquestionably committed to societal transformation. In a political context, a fictional language does not denote "an imaginary world, and even more that its Aristotelian sense as 'arrangement of actions.' It [fiction] is not a term that designates the imaginary as opposed to the real; it involves a reframing of the 'real'" (Ranciere, 2010: p. 141). The literary fiction, as the genuine political endeavor, may initiate modes of being that tear bodies and speeches from assigned spaces that restrain "them to private or public lives, pinning them down to a certain time and space, to specific 'bodies', that is to specific ways of being, seeing and saying" (p. 139).

Moncada's plague is a sample of numerous speeches that assault the underlying political structure of Chimbote and expose the economic woes fashioned by transnational corporations. The plague discharges a constellation of empty (or floating)

signifiers that emerge if “there is a structural impossibility in signification as such, and only if this impossibility can signify itself as an interruption (subversion, distortion, etc.) of the structure of the sign” (Laclau, 2007: p. 37). The plague I suggest points towards a primal interruption at the core of western political philosophy: the demarcation of speech and voice.

In classical Greece, men endowed with speech governed the conventions that made an object an object and validated the authority of those who recognized what object was worth disputing upon. Walter Mignolo observes a corresponding epistemological structure in the Americas, when he argues that the logic of coloniality ascertains that the control and management of “actors and institutions engineering the game were establishing its rules on which the struggles for decision making would unfold” (2011: p. 8). The acquisition of speech introduces a conceptual node that precedes the colonial matrix, and once enunciated, may be helpful to decolonize the project of western modernity in reference to Arguedas’ *fiction*. Ranciere asserts, in reference to Aristotle’s *Politics*, “The supremely political destiny of man is attested by a *sign*, the possession of logos, that is, of speech, which *expresses*, while the voice simply *indicates*” (1999: p. 2).

Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among animals with the power of speech. Speech is something different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and used by them to express pain or pleasure ... Speech, on the other hand, serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and unjust ... It is sharing a common view in these matters that makes a household and a state (Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, quoted by Ranciere, 1999: p. 1).

Speech signifies logos and in the process produces the place of its inception. The relationship concerning speech and the place of its enunciation is not causal. It is a simultaneous phenomenon predicated on the communal consolidation of logos (of a household or state). Speech and the order of a community are inextricably coupled by “sharing a common view on these matters”. The order of the community is *never immaterial*, as it establishes the distribution of parts, property, and persons that make up the communal whole. The intersection of speech and the place where it belongs is vital to decipher the systems that converge in *The Foxes*. Moncada’s plague, for instance, seeks to unhinge a communal order to give life to an emerging place of enunciation. The speechless being’s claim to speech implies and demands a reorganization of a communal order.

The political nature of humans unfortunately exceeds a simple desire to attain speech. Simple desires belong to the animal realm of voice. Speech is neither the fulfillment of desire nor the immaterial conception of logos, but the embodiment of a communal order. An animal existence attains speech only when it becomes recognized as a being that has meaning for a household or state. To clarify the spatial dimension of speech, Giorgio Agamben quotes the abovementioned Aristotelian passage and translates the word “speech” as “language”. Agamben points out that the query “In what way does bare life dwell in the polis?” corresponds to the question “In what way does the living being have language [speech]?” (1998: p. 8). The acquisition of language [speech] *embodies* the spatial frontier that inaugurates the order of a polis.

Moncada’s speech reveals the reigning logos, political and

corporate, that nurtures Chimbote. The speech-plague establishes a place of enunciation at the Modelo market and simultaneously embodies the forces that underscore Chimbote’s violent process of modernization. To establish the speech as speech, Moncada’s first person enunciation must have meaning for a community, household, or state. In this context his speech, the place of its enunciation, and the order of the community are symbiotic.

The multiplicity of logos embodied in the speeches that inhabit *The Foxes* make the task of analyzing the conceptualization of speech, the place of its enunciation, and the order of the community remarkably challenging. There are a number of foundational narratives, however. The first tale of *The Foxes* establishes an order of domination that manages the seaport’s resources. Captain Chaucato is an agent of the economic forces that produce and unevenly permeate the peripheral metropolis. His speech embodies the implicit hierarchy that dominates Chimbote. Along with Braschi, he is a founder of the fishing industry.

Fábricas, bolicheras, muelles, fierros, cada año menos obreros y más tragones ellos, pa’comer en la mar. Yo comencé a miar primero en la bahía pa’Braschi; el agua limpita le metimos huevo. ¡Braschi es grande! Tiene más potencia que la dinamita en la cabeza, en el culo, en la firma. Braschi ¡putamadre!, tú has hecho la pesca. Ahora comes gente (Arguedas, 1992: p. 28).

[Factories, trawlers, wharves, cash; every year they are bigger gluttons for goblin’ up what’s in the ocean; every year there’s less workmen. When I first started out pissin’ in the bay for Braschi we were messin’ up nice clear water. Braschi’s big! He’s got more power than dynamite in his head, in his ass, in his company. Hell, Braschi—you’re the one that made the fishery what it is. Now yo’re goblin’ people up (Arguedas, 2000: p. 30)].

The captain introduces the readers to the history of the fishing industry. While out at sea, his speech is uttered to El Mudo [the speechless] from the bridge of his trawler *Sanson I*. His speech conceives a symbiotic relationship between industry and workforce; the fisheries digest the fish while the industry cannibalizes the workforce. Mignolo observes that in the twentieth century the “*dispensability* (or expendability) of *human life* and of *life in general*” surfaces in the spheres of economics and knowledge (2011: p. 6). Human and natural resources are exploited equally. Chaucato then visualizes the day he pissed on the virgin-like waters of the bay, and the reflection of literal and figurative humiliation introduces Braschi, a spectral capitalist baron. We visualize the economic configuration of Chimbote from the epicenter of the local industry, Chimbote’s bay. For the readers, the speech produces the place of its inception. Chaucato’s speech, the place of its enunciation, and the order of the community embodied in it [speech] are fused.

The hills that oversee the bay produce a counterpoint to Chaucato’s speech. Roughly at the same time Chaucato is navigating the bay, three prostitutes are walking up to the slums after a long night at the brothels. From looked-at commodities on display at the Stable brothel, the prostitutes are transfigured into observers of the industrial spectacle that evolves at their feet. The scenery comes to life by means of apocalyptic visions partly representing the processes of modernity active in Chimbote. From the trail the port glows “like a barbecue pit” (Ar-

guedas, 2000: p. 48). If Chaucato's speech embodies an order of domination, the prostitutes' speech establishes their subordination to that order.

-Hijo de chuchumeca es maldición. ¡Ahistá! –gritó ...
¡Ahistá infierno –y señaló el puerto- cocinando pescado,
cacana de pescado también! Ahistá candela. Su hijo de
infierno, hijo de Tinoco, es el hijo de Orfa.

-Hijo de chuchumeca, hijo nomás. Tinoco es chanco, con
lani demoniado, loco –replicó la primera

-¡Tinoco, putamadreeéé! ¡Pior que infierno, hijo de can-
dela pestosa! (Arguedas, 1992: p. 45)

["Hooker's child is curse! So there!" she screamed. ...
"Down there's hell", and she pointed to the port. "Cook-
ing fish, fish turds too! Down there's fire. Orfa's child is
Tinoco's child outa Hell."

"Hooker's child's a child, that's all. Tinoco's a pig with
lani (penis) possessed by devil, crazy," the first replied.

"Tinoco, son of a bitch! Worse than hell, son of stink-
ing fire." (Arguedas, 2000: pp. 48-49)]

The affiliation between Orfa and pimp Tinoco precludes a communal foundation. In an extreme rendering of the Christian original sin, the newborn is dammed by the sins of the parents. From the hills the prostitutes observe the bay, Chaucato's place of enunciation, to construct an alienated sense of self. The prostitutes' self-perceived identity, "cursed" beings out of hell, is fused with the visualization of the place they inhabit, the "hell" down there. The apocalyptic visions of the port establish the prostitutes' sense of belonging in a place that has them trapped like animals. The prostitutes visualize the order of the community but do not produce logos except as a confirmation of the place assigned to them. In a radical re-interpretation of Sisyphus' myth, the prostitutes face life sentenced to a cyclical reiteration of anguish in a place they are *free* to leave.

The playing field of politics regrettably is never equal and only select citizens are endowed with speech, while others merely listen. The distribution of the communal parts, the order of the community, is partitioned in accordance with the possession of wealth. In general terms, a minority possesses a majority of property and thus decides who is endowed with speech. The place of the dispossessed majority comes into being in the "declaration that they are counted as those of no account" (Ranciere, 1999: p. 38). Chaucato, for instance, counts the laborers as those of no account (as the workforce is literally eaten by the industry).

Speech in this sense inevitably implies an unequal distribution of the parts of the community. The genuine political act emerges in the deployment of a primary dispute that short circuits the logic of property, the distribution of the parts that comprise the communal whole. In a democracy, the community becomes whole by masking the logic of inequality in the name of freedom. In the original structure of politics, the wrong "is simply the mode of subjectification in which the assertion of equality takes its political shape" (Ranciere, 1999: p. 39). Orators enshrined *freedom* at the Greek forums to tame the great animal: the people. Freedom however is never synonymous to equality. It is *the effect* of granting a part in the community to those who have no part. The wrong "institutes a singular universal, a polemical universal, by tying the presentation of

equality, as part of those who have no part, to the conflict between parts of the city" (p. 39). In *The Foxes*, the prostitutes are *free* to leave but do not have the *means* to do so, the political logic of equality collides with the unequal logic of property.

The wrong embodied in the prostitutes' speech should not be interpreted as a well-intended theater of victimization staged in *The Foxes*. The trap is also a point of departure that deserves historical examination. In regards to Herodotus' *Histories*, Ranciere examines how a slave revolt contested the Scythian's "normal order of things" (1999: p. 12). In ancient times, Scythian slaves were blinded to ensure their loyalty to the warrior order. The slaves' economic function, milking cows, defined their place in the order of the community. The masters blinded the slaves to ensure they solely perform that economic activity. To modify the distribution of the community in order to aid the slaves would literally signify the economic collapse and the death of the Scythian society. The unequal distribution of the parts of the collective is critical for the survival of the whole.

Scythian expeditions, however, compelled the warriors to spend a generation away from the homeland. At home, the natural order of things altered and the ensuing generation of slaves was born "and raised with their eyes open" (Ranciere, 1999: p. 12). The enlightened slaves concluded that they were equal to their masters and would fight for their newly envisaged rights. When the warriors returned, they saw what they considered a minor nuisance and attacked the slaves. To everyone's surprise, the enlightened slaves repelled the warriors. A shrewd warrior gave pause to his peers and, at a critical moment in the battle, he *spoke*.

Take my advice—lay spear and bow aside, and let each man fetch his horsewhip, and go boldly up to them. So long as they see us with arms in our hands, they imagine themselves our equals in birth and bravery; but let them behold us with no other weapon than the whip, and they will feel that they are our slaves, and flee before us (Herodotus, *The Histories* quoted by Ranciere, 1999: p. 12).

Shocked by the vision of the horsewhip the slaves fled. Although the principle of equality was "literally mapped out over the territory and defended by force of arms" (p. 13), the slaves were not able to institute their leveling logos into a speech that had meaning for a community. In counterintuitive fashion, since all the slaves were equal they could not establish a political subject—which emerges by the miscount [wrong] of the part of those who have no business in establishing the partitions of the community. When the Scythian warriors cease to recognize the slaves as antagonists, the speech of the conquering warriors defines a place that deemed the slaves' claim to logos unthinkable.

Chaucato, as the Scythian warriors, establishes a place of enunciation by establishing a right to domination. The prostitutes, as the Scythian slaves, have the "capacity to understand logos without having the capacity of the logos" (Ranciere, 1999: p. 17). They can visualize the place that has them enslaved but cannot produce a speech that re-defines the distribution of parts in the community. The wrong imbedded in Chimbote, as it was for the Scythian slaves, traps the prostitutes in a place defined as hell. In contrast to the Scythian slaves, however, the prostitutes are *free* to depart but cannot escape a global system of economic exploitation.

The discursive swarms that inhabit Chimbote, however, modify the relationship of speech, the place of its enunciation, and

the order of the community by conceiving the death of a dominant social order. In this sense, Arguedas' *fiction* transcends Herodotus' account of the Scythian slaves, which concludes by confirming a dominant Scythian social order. Decay and renewal are vital to *The Foxes*, and the cycle of life and death is personified, for instance, in the abovementioned speech-plague proclaimed by crazy Moncada. Where there is death in the novel we may find rebirth and a thousand and one dead ends may yield a multitude of overtures. Fisherman Asto, for example, grew up in the Andes where landlords termed *gamonales* enact the law. The relationship of parts in the Andean communities is comparable to the Scythian distribution of society. The Andean laborers only have value in so far as they reproduce a semi-feudal hierarchy inherited from colonial times. The abovementioned prostitutes presumably escaped a semi-feudal Andean order and migrated to the coast searching for a modern life.

Asto undoubtedly migrated to Chimbote to establish a new life. To get his fisherman's license, he tied himself to a dock until he learnt how to swim. The emergence of his speech in the novel may follow Jurgen Habermas' canonical narrative about how disenfranchised populations become meaningful subjects of modern societies (Habermas, 1991). In the following quote, Asto is drunk and walking from the brothels, constructed over putrid roadside dunes, towards the Pan-American Highway.

-Pa-pa-para los se-se-serranos de tierra. La-la mar i-igual, o-o-oye pa-pa-paseante.

Asto se dio cuenta que silbaba sólo cuando llegó al final del callejón rosado y se acabó la luz neón. Pasó al campo de arena. "Yu...criollo, carajo; argentino, carajo. ¿Quién Serrano, ahura?" hablando se acercó a uno de los automóviles de la plaza (Arguedas, 1992: p. 39).

["Fo-fo-for the highlanders on land. Th-th-the ocean ma-ma-makes e-e-everyone equal, ya-ya-ya hear me pa-pa-pacer?"]

Asto realized he was whistling when he came to the end of the pink alleyway and the neon lighting. He stepped out onto the sandy field. "Me *criollo* ... from the coast, god-damnit; me from Argentina, goddamnit. Who highlander now?" still talking [with a high Andes accent] he went up to one of the cars in the lot (Arguedas, 2000: p. 42)].

The speech is made possible by the fishing economy, "the ocean makes everyone equal". The proclaimed equality is in great measure the effect of living an altered distribution of the parts of a community. The fluidity of Chimbote's markets would undoubtedly appear as a space from which an Andean migrant could feel liberated and aspire for equality. Challenging the subjugation of the Peruvian interior from an alternate place of enunciation Asto declares: "Who highlander now?"

The modernizing process embodied in Asto's speech however fails to recognize underlying social categories prevalent in coastal Peru. Later that night, while walking to the highway, Asto flags a taxi. We will observe that the cab driver defines the order of the community in Chimbote by negating the equality of highlanders.

-Oe, chofir -le dijo-, a me casa, carajo. Hasta me casa.

-¿Adónde vas, jefe?

-Acero, barrio Acero. Pescador lancha zambo Mendieta, yo.

-Barriada dirás, serrano -le corrigió el chofer (Arguedas, 1992: p. 39).

["Hey driver," he said. "To the house, damnit. As far as me house."

"Where you goin', boss?"

"Acero, Acero suburb. Fisherman *zambo* Mendieta trawler, me."

"Acero slum you must be sayin', highlander," the taxi driver corrected him (Arguedas, 2000: pp. 42-43)].

The men have never met and have neither prior knowledge nor history of each other. The partition of the communal that deems Asto equal to non-highlanders, nonetheless, is simply unthinkable within the logos embodied by the taxi driver's speech. The logos that underlies the taxi driver's implicit distribution of the seaport equates highlanders with slum dwellers. The taxi driver declares that Asto could not possibly live in the suburb *because* he is a highlander. Fortunately for the taxi driver, the confrontation occurs in between the brothels and the Pan-American Highway. The driver would presumably be in great danger if he uttered his discriminatory speech at the brothels or from a fishing vessel.

The problem for Asto lies in putting into place a visible relationship in a space in which this was considered a non-relationship. For Asto's emancipatory speech to succeed, its reception essentially implies a modification of the relationship of the parts to the communal whole. In this context, "Politics consists in interpreting this relationship, which means first setting it up as theatre, inventing the argument, in the double logical and dramatic sense of the term, connecting the unconnected" (Ranciere, 2010: p. 88).

In *The Foxes*, Don Gregorio Bazalar connects the unconnected by establishing a community in a place that does not yet exist, a new cemetery. Due to a local edict the disenfranchised must relocate the crosses of their relatives from the official Progreso burial ground to a new cemetery located by the port's trash mounds. Don Gregorio is a minor political figure in charge of organizing the pilgrimage. The cemetery is a place that counterpoints the hellish-bay revealed to the readers by Chaucato and the prostitutes. The pilgrims gaze at a deserted land that disappears from view and into the distant Andean mountains, bringing to mind highland cosmologies. The cemetery is a locus that has no closure, "Here it is; here's where it begins. There's no end to it," said the grave keeper" (Arguedas, 2000: p. 72). It is a place about to exist.

Conciudadanos que cargáis las cruces de vuestros muertos -habló don Gregorio Bazalar, de la barriada de San Pedro, delegado-. Conciudadanos: aquí hemos llegado en nombre del Padre, del Hijo, del Monicípio, y del Subprefecto, pues. ¡A enterrar las cruces pues que estamos trayendo, fúnebres! En cualquier partecita ... Lo que hay en el corazón es el campo donde tranquilo está el muerto, acompañado de su comunidad pueblo. Así es señor guardián, representante del Obispo, Gobiernos. ¿No quieren que estemos en cementerio moderno, norteamericano? Gracias sean dadas; para nosotros este hondonada del montaña está bien. La moralla se tomba; la flor, feo, se achicharra. El montaña no se acaba pues. Aquí, nadies llora, sea dicho, Amén (Arguedas, 1992: p. 69).

["Fellow citizens who bear the crosses of your dead," Don Gregorio Bazalar, delegate from the Shantytown of San Pedro, held forth. "Fellow citizens: well, here we've come in the name of the Father, the Son, the Municipality, and the Subprefect. To bury our crosses that we're bringing, funeral ones! Just anywhere ... What's in our hearts is the field where the dead one's at peace, accompanyin' his town community. That the way it is, Señor grave-keeper, representative of the Señor Bishop, Governments. They don't want us to be in the modern American cemetery? Thanks be; this hollow in the foothills suits us fine. The walls tumble down," he went onto say [in his highland accent]; the flower gets burnt to a ugly crisp. The mountain doesn't come to an end, then. Here nobodies weep, so it be said. Amen." (Arguedas, 2000: p. 73)]

Bazalar speaks to *them* about *us*, utilizing the first person plural to emphasize a communal we. The new burial ground is a locus that has no closure, a place existing here and ending there-somewhere. The subject position chosen by don Gregorio, first person plural, acts much the same way. It is a speech acted here yet constituted there, an enunciating I acting-out us.

The speech challenges figures of authority, establishes a communal language, and decrees a foundational place. Bazalar frames his community in opposition to a negatively imagined outside, the authorities who have given us these lands. The pronoun "they" designates another being with whom the conflict ensues and with whom the situation as beings with names is under question. It delivers the dispute by addressing a third person and "sets up the first person, the 'I' or 'We' of the speaker, as representative of a community" (Ranciere, 1999: p. 48). The use of third person is key to political speech, "It is always both less and more: less for it is always in the form of a monologue that the dispute, the gap internal to the logos, declares itself, and more, for commentary sets of a multiplication of persons" (p. 48). Bazalar's speech names amorphous space and establishes a community from a place that is in the process of becoming. In contrast to Chaucato, the prostitutes, or Asto, the speech governs its place of enunciation.

The process by which Bazalar claims speech has a long-standing history. For instance, Ranciere assesses nineteenth century French Pierre-Simon Ballanche's re-write of Livy's tale on a dispute that occurred shortly after the end of the Volscian's war, between plebeians at Aventine Hill and the roman ambassadorship of Menenius Agrippa. In his re-write of the event, Ballanche challenges Livy's understanding of the disagreement. The Latin historian describes the conflict in terms of a revolt of the body's members, body as a metaphor for society, which is eventually tamed by the intervention of Menenius Agrippa. In Livy's appreciation the revolt does not have a meaning of its own except by confirming a prior order of society. Ballanche asserts that Livy fails to identify the fable's "real context: that of a quarrel over the issue of speech itself" (Ranciere, 1999: p. 23).

Ballanche, Ranciere observes, "performs a restaging of the conflict in which the entire issue at stake involves finding out whether there exists a common stage where plebeians and patricians can debate anything" (Ranciere, 1999: p. 23). For the Roman patricians there was "no place for discussion with the plebes for the simple reasons that plebes do not speak. They do not speak because they are beings without a name, deprived of logos—meaning, of symbolic enrollment in the city" (p. 23).

The plebeians live an existence that except for their reproductive capacity does not have any transcendence for the state. From the Roman citizens' perspective Menenius Agrippa's fatal mistake was "imagining that words were issuing from the plebs when logically the only thing that could issue forth was noise" (p. 24).

In stark contrast with Chaucato or the prostitutes, Bazalar's speech proclaims a new distribution of the parts of the community. Don Gregorio Bazalar's speech comes into being in a place without boundaries. The community of pilgrims may ratify his speech and in the process constitute an alternate logos. Shaping the place of its inception within an emerging communal framework, the speech has the potential to radically transform Chimbote. The problem at hand is establishing a distribution of the parts of a community that was previously unthinkable, such as aforementioned afro-Peruvian Moncada. The latter's *speech-plague* energizes, renews, and splinters the dominant communal order, "The modern political animal is first a literary animal, caught in a circuit of a literariness that undoes the relationship between the order of words and the order of bodies that determine the place of each" (Ranciere, 1999: p. 37). The struggle for speechless beings that pursue emancipation lies in managing the critical nexus between speech, its place of enunciation, and the conception and eventful materialization of an alternate social order.

The establishment of a place of enunciation is always concrete. For something to be (or become) it must exist (or occur) someplace. Edward Casey observes that the conceptualization of place originates from times immemorial to Aristotle's physics, Hegel's logic, and Heidegger's being-in-the-world (1998: p. 6). To think of something, indeed anything in particular, is to think of the place it comes into being. The conception of place is weaved into the delicate fabric of being, and in origin myths such as the Judeo Christian genesis or the Mayan *Popul Vuh* celestial creation is established by a godly differentiation of places. The divine word shapes amorphous space by naming the place of its creation. Bazalar's speech, in this sense, shapes [names] the place of its inception. His emerging communal identity is placed in-between "we" [disenfranchised] and "they" [authorities] at the new cemetery, a place in the process of becoming.

Alain Badiou invites us to consider, "What is the meaning of the something-in-itself and the something-for-the-other? Pure identity and placed identity; the letter and the space in which is marked; theory and practice" (2000: p. 7). The characters in *The Foxes* become, if only for an ephemeral instant, actors in a place split amidst their pure identities and their placed beings. If a character steps out and speaks in the novel, such as the prostitutes, Chaucato, Asto, Moncada, or Bazalar, it "comes down to a dispute over the object of discussion and over the capacity of those who are making an object of it" (Ranciere, 1999: p. XII). The seemingly inconsequential contradiction of pure identity and placed identity in effect founds being as scission. The partition of the communal embodied in Aristotelian speech effectively demarcates the place of each subject in lived space.

Speech's performance-effect, the embodiment of lived communal logos, may subvert the monotonous pessimism that has permeated our present day. Roberto Esposito notes, "It has been widely accepted that contemporary philosophy has been showing signs of uncertainty and even weariness for some time now" (2012: p. 4). By enshrining the sphere of language in detriment of history and lived space, German critical theory, French de-

construction, and the analytic tradition converge in an entropic vortex in which the philosophical task is “apparently a self-critical refutation of its own hegemonic claims to a Real that is located outside its reach” (p. 5). The countercurrent embodied by Italian *living thought* (from Vico, Machiavelli to Gramsci and Pasolini), argues that language is “so constitutive of the human being that it can be identified as the point of suture between nature and mutation, invariance and difference, biology and history” (p. 8). Rather than converging on the impossibility of signifying the Real, language’s *aporia* participates in the flow and antinomies of history and life. José María Arguedas’ *fictional language* in this sense points towards activating an affirmative mode of being embodied in speech, a process of exhaustion and renewal at the crossroads of aesthetics, politics, and history.

Placing *The Foxes* in a timeline or spatial dimension is perilous. The novel unquestionably maps capitalism’s uneven geographical development of space, a link in an economic chain that connects Peru’s urban periphery with transnational markets. Around the time *The Foxes* was published in 1971, Henri Lefebvre observed that few people “would reject the idea that capital and capitalism ‘influence’ practical matters relating to space, from the construction of buildings to the distribution of investments and the worldwide division of labor” (1991: pp. 9-10). However, a key hermeneutical challenge imposed by *The Foxes* is how to decode the multiple epistemologies or cosmologies that conceive dissimilar notions of community and communal space. Castro-Klaren, for instance, observes that the novel produces “a geography” in which a Huarochirí cosmogony introduces a material conception of space that mediates with the multiple forces that inhabit the text (2000: p. 314). Martin Lienhard perceives a spatial distribution of the novel “that is divided, as the *Tawantinsuyo*, in an up above, the sandy hilltops, and a down below: the seaport” (1992: p. 328—my translation).

In the process of claiming speech, the characters in *The Foxes* transform or confirm a place of enunciation and a communal order. While *The Foxes* and its characters comprise a rhizomatic node in a global transformation driven by capitalism, they simultaneously inherit and reproduce non-capitalist conceptualizations of space. From the perspective of disenfranchised subjects at the margins of the world market, politics becomes a matter of “modes of subjectification. By *subjectification* I mean the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable with a given field of experience” (Ranciere, 1999: p. 35). If validated by a community, it is at this seemingly mundane node of speech and place that Arguedas’ *fictional language* shows us a path by which alternate notions of community may be deployed.

Founder of Peruvian liberation theology Gustavo Gutiérrez recollects that José María Arguedas’ own voice was heard in the middle of the boisterous national debates “as the voice of ‘crazy’ Moncada in Chimbote’s markets” (2003: p. 1—my translation). Only time will determine if the speech-plague will produce a place of enunciation validated by a community as having

meaning for a household or state. Gustavo Gutiérrez indeed sought to establish Arguedas’ voice as speech by dedicating *A Theology of Liberation* (1971) to the ethnographer and literary author. I suggest that to decolonize western modernity from the global south, while assuming its virtues and sins, it is vital to manage and uphold the critical nexus between speech, its place of enunciation, and the conception and eventful materialization of alternate social orders.

REFERENCES

- Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford California: Stanford University Press.
- Arguedas, J. M. (1992). *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo*. México: Consejo Nacional Para La Cultura y Las Artes.
- Arguedas, J. M. (2000). *The fox from up above and the fox from down below*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Arguedas, J. M. (1974). El sueño del pongo. In *Agua y otros cuentos* (pp. 161-168). Lima: Ed. Milla Batres.
- Badiou, A. (2000). *Theory of the subject*. London, New York: Continuum.
- Casey, E. (1998). *The fate of place*. Berkeley, London: University of California Press.
- Castro-Klaren, S. (2011). *The narrow pass of our nerves: Writing, coloniality and postcolonial theory*. Madrid, Frankfurt: Iberoamericana-Vervuet.
- Castro-Klaren, S. (2000). Like a pig, when he’s thinkin. In J. Ortega (Ed.), *The fox from up above and the fox from down below* (pp. 307-323). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Cornejo Polar, A. (1992). Un ensayo sobre “Los Zorros” de Arguedas. In E.-M. Fell (Ed.), *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (pp. 297-306). México: Consejo Nacional Para La Cultura y Las Artes.
- Esposito, R. (2012). *Living thought: The origins and actuality of Italian philosophy*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.
- Gómez Mango, E. (1992). Todas las lenguas. In E.-M. Fell (Ed.), *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (pp. 360-370). México: Consejo Nacional Para La Cultura y Las Artes.
- Gutiérrez, G. (2003). *Entre las calandrias*. Lima: CEP.
- Gutiérrez, G. (1988). *A theology of liberation*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Habermas, J. (1991). *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. Cambridge Mass: MIT Press.
- Laclau, E. (2007). *Emancipation(s)*. London, New York: Verso.
- Lienhard, M. (1992). La “andinización” del vanguardismo urbano. In E.-M. Fell (Ed.), *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* (pp. 321-332). México: Consejo Nacional Para La Cultura y Las Artes.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Mignolo, W. (2011). *The darker side of modernity: Global futures, decolonial options*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.
- Oyata, M. (2012). José María Arguedas: Representación y representatividad. *A Contracorriente*, 9, 35-64.
- Rama, A. (2012). *Writing across cultures: Narrative transculturation in Latin America*. Durham, London: Duke University Press.
- Ranciere, J. (1999). *Disagreement*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ranciere, J. (2010). *Dissensus: On politics and aesthetics*. London, New York: Continuum.
- Rowe, W. (2000). Reading Arguedas’s foxes. In J. Ortega (Ed.), *The fox from up Above and the fox from down below* (pp. 283-289). Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.