

EL ESPACIO LITERARIO
DE JUAN BRUCE-NOVOA
Y
LA LITERATURA
CHICANA

Un Análisis Metacrítico del Texto

JUAN BRUCE-NOVOA'S
THEORY OF
CHICANO

LITERARY SPACE

A Metacritical Analysis of the Text



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TRANSLATION BY LUPE CARDENAS

**JUAN BRUCE-NOVOA'S THEORY OF CHICANO LITERARY SPACE:
A METACRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT**

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FOREWARD

This Foreword is a brief overview of a lengthy and detailed study, whose bases are fundamentally philosophical. Some readers may find it burdensome, precisely because it is founded on philosophical concepts that are not generally seen in literary criticism. However, those readers who are interested in the study of philosophy may be pleasantly surprised to discover that this analysis is both a rewarding reading experience and an intellectual challenge. Having said the preceding, my intention here is to introduce this volume to the reader without making an in-depth commentary on its content.

During the last decade, I have had the opportunity and the good fortune to know the co-authors of this book. Professor Justo S. Alarcón is well-known in academic circles—regional, national, as well as international—for his work as a critic in the field of Chicano literature and as a writer of creative literature. Professor Lupe Cárdenas, since she belongs to a younger generation that is still developing, is not as well-known but is gaining recognition in these same academic circles.

As the title of the book indicates, this study is a "metacritical" analysis of an article by the well-known critic of Chicano literature, Juan Bruce-Novoa. The co-authors' basic approach in this volume is a close reading of the article's text itself. In other words, it is a "step by step scrutiny" of the theoretical article by Bruce-Novoa titled "The Space of Chicano Literature." This article originally appeared in 1975 and has been re-published twice. Recently, Bruce-Novoa included this article in his book *RetroSpace*, that was also recently published.

The originality of this present study is of special interest to us. The analysis by Justo S. Alarcón and Lupe Cárdenas, although relatively brief, reaches certain profound theoretical levels not often found in monographic studies of this kind. Moreover, this study is not merely "another book," but a singularly original work which, perhaps for the first time, is truly a work of "metacriticism," a detailed critique of critical theory. In this case, the subject is the "theory of Chicano literary space" set forth by Juan Bruce-Novoa in the "The Space of Chicano Literature."

It has been stated that for there to be criticism, there must be literature; and that there to be theory, there must be criticism. It is also true that for there to be metacriticism, it must be preceded by critical theory. It does seem that the time is at hand for this type of analytical metacriticism. Therefore, the present volume confirms what we had stated earlier: that Alarcón and Cárdenas are pioneering a groundbreaking new effort in the field of metacriticism.

With the advent of Chicano literary criticism, and its accompanying theoretical formulations, a new stage of frank and open intellectual discourse began some time ago. Now, with this foray into metacriticism, a new polemical phase should follow. There is no doubt that this book under consideration here will be instrumental in fulfilling that function. We believe that Juan Bruce-Novoa has attempted to broaden the critical-theoretical focus on Chicano literature of the 70s. At that time, Bruce-Novoa himself pointed out that Chicano critics utilized critical approaches that were too limited, too provincial. Now, Alarcón and Cárdenas have come forward with this

volume to demonstrate that the few literary theories still extant within the field of Chicano literature should be broadened even further by infusing into them a philosophical base upon which these theories can be more solidly anchored.

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PREAMBLE

Almost two decades ago there was a genuine interest in three articles that saw the light of day in the second half of the 70s and that, like those of other scholars, left an imprint on the corpus of Chicano literary criticism. This is in reference to Juan Bruce-Novoa's "The Space of Chicano Literary Space," (*De Colores*, 1975), Joseph Sommers' "From the Critical Premise to the Product," (*New Scholar*, 1977), and Ramón Saldívar's "The Dialectics of Difference: Toward a Theory of the Chicano Novel," (*MELUS*, 1979), now considered "classics" by Chicano critics.

In two of the three articles, Juan Bruce-Novoa and Ramón Saldívar quickly appropriate the term "theories" to describe their respective literary hypotheses. Furthermore, both articles were subsequently reprinted several times and eventually evolved into books for each of the authors. The logical conclusion is that these seminal articles would contain, in and of themselves, the seed or nucleus of a possible or supposed theory as explicitly professed by each critic.

In view of the above, and after almost twenty years subsequent to their publication, there was not a single literary critic that had attempted the task of undertaking a serious and thorough study of these theoretical articles. This, among other things, is the main objective of our investigation: to produce an extensive metacritical analysis of the first of the three articles, which was authored by Bruce-Novoa and published for the first time in 1975.

This study has been divided into five parts. The first (Introduction) and the last (Conclusion) are necessary, and flank the main body of the study. But the most important and extensive sections, logically, are the three dedicated to the meticulous analysis of Bruce-Novoa's text. These three divisions correspond to the three sections into which his article is divided: a) The Literary Space, b) The Chicano Literary Space, and c) Its Application. As can be observed by the subtitles, the first two sections of the article comprise the theoretical framework, and the third involves the praxis or application of the theory to literary works chosen by Bruce-Novoa.

It is necessary to make another observation with respect to the divisions of the chapters. At the completion of the study, a copy of Bruce-Novoa's book *RetroSpace* (1990) was obtained. Having read the book, an obligation to add another chapter, justifiably entitled "Postdata," became apparent.

The method chosen for the lengthy analysis was the simplest: to follow step by step the development of Bruce-Novoa's "theory" in the manner in which it unfolded in the text itself. It was an arduous task. An attempt was made to adhere to the letter of the text as much as possible in an effort to grasp all the conceivable meanings of his affirmations, digressions, parallelisms, including the contradictions, these latter sometimes implicit, other times explicit. In addition, the ideas of other scholars concerning the themes being discussed here have been included in this analysis.

Obviously, our own ideas and concepts permeate the entire analytical process, as any reader of

this text can perceive without difficulty. In fact, this was one of our objectives: to produce an intensely personal metacritical study, without pretending to replace an existing "theory" with one that we did not promise to deliver. A conscientious effort was made to scrutinize or inspect the text carefully, sometimes even with a magnifying glass, to determine if, after closely examining the text and isolated concepts, these latter could prevail on their own merits, to serve as a prop, a base and a foundation for the laborious task of elaborating a "theory." The critic-reader can arrive at his/her own conclusions with respect to the stated objective, after having compared the quoted excerpts of Bruce-Novoa's article with this study.

I

INTRODUCTION

For over a decade we have been preoccupied with the subject matter which is known as critical methodologies. So much that it became imperative to examine several theoretical approaches within the context of Chicano literature in an article published in 1979 (Alarcón, "Consideraciones"). The motive for writing on this topic was two-fold: 1) an interest and dedication to the discipline and 2) an internal uneasiness that bordered, and continues to do so, on healthy skepticism. Presently there is a dissatisfaction that still lingers. We believe that it resides in the nature of the problem itself: the arbitrariness of the critical methodologies that are utilized to dissect and analyze the artistic object--better known as a literary work.

As a clarifying preamble to the above, and to what will follow in these pages, we would like to note that we can detect a disproportion, a lack of parity and, up to a certain point, an absurd vision in the entire matter. It involves the following: an artistic object—literature— should not be treated, nor can it be properly analyzed, with a critical method which attempts to transform itself into a scientific one. To see it from a different viewpoint, the subject-object relationship could be inverted to say: let us analyze the physical principle which states "matter expands with heat" utilizing a literary critical methodology, such as the archetypal or semiotic. This would be an aberration.

Firstly, it is a wide-spread belief that art is art because it is founded on esthetic values. And all values, whether esthetic or artistic, fall within the subjective domain. Consequently, it cannot be approached or analyzed with a primordially objective and scientific instrument. Perhaps, this explains why there has been, and there is presently, and will always be so many relatively short-lived schools of literary criticism.

Sometime ago, we also read several articles concerning literary criticism which are currently designated as "classical," and, seemingly, those who affirm this have not taken the time, nor attempted to explain the reason for their thinking. This is in reference, in particular, to the three critics mentioned previously who were attempting to and/or had a strong desire to establish a "theoretical" methodology that would serve as a foundation for the analysis of Chicano literature.

We are thinking specifically of their respective articles: 1) "The Space of Chicano Literature" (*De Colores*), by Juan Bruce-Novoa, 2) "From the Critical Premise to the Product" (*The New Scholar*), by Joseph Sommers and 3) "A Dialectic of Difference: Toward a Theory of the Chicano Novel, by Ramón Saldivar (*MELUS/Chicano Fiction*).

We will begin by analyzing the theoretical part of the article which chronologically appeared first, in other words, "The Space of Chicano Literature" by Juan Bruce-Novoa. We debated with respect to the plan to be followed in this present study. It was decided, finally, that the best way to proceed was to opt for a step by step textual analysis of the different segments into which the

article is divided.

Juan Bruce-Novoa, well-known critic of Chicano literature, begins his theoretical study with three brief quotations, in the manner of epigraphs. It can be assumed beyond doubt that the crux of his theoretical analysis resides precisely, although not exclusively, in these quotes, inasmuch as he also elaborates his own proper concepts during the process which end up confusing instead of clarifying, the general premise of departure. Since these quotations are extremely important and brief, they will be transcribed below, even though they are only from a secondary source.

It is nothing less than the impossibility for the Being to freely or independently manifest itself. Its essence is found in reality and that which we perceive from reality are its signs, its reflections, that very soon disappear devoured by contingency. (Juan García Ponce, *La aparición de lo invisible*, 1968, 204). (Translation ours) (22).

Thus, the image is a desperate [poetic] recourse against the silence that invades us more each time we attempt to express/describe the terrible experience of our surroundings and of ourselves. The poem is language in tension: in the extreme of being and in being to the extreme. Octavio Paz, *El arco y la lira*, 1967, 111). (Translation ours). (22)

Only from nothing are there infinite possibilities —all simultaneously possible. Only in nothing can you find everything. (María Medina López, unedited manuscript). (22)

In general, at the risk of being imprecise, each passage could be characterized in the following manner: the first quote is of a philosophical nature; the second has a poetic-philosophical flavor, with psychological undertones; and the third has a pseudo-existentialist quality to it. Having stated the above, some global commentaries are necessary.

García Ponce's text is truly ingenious. We make this observation, not precisely because it is a scholastic disquisition, but rather because of its transparency and synthetic compactness. This quote summarizes to perfection one of the most fundamental and ontological quandaries ever confronted by all philosophers of any schools of philosophical thought throughout the ages, ranging from the Greeks to present day existentialism, and embracing Cartesian as well as Kantian idealism. It involves the ensuing dichotomies: subject/object, substance/accident, necessity/contingency, and intellectuality/sensibility, in addition to "continuity"/"discontinuity," of which Juan Bruce-Novoa speaks extensively in his article. Briefly: the Being as a transcendent and metaphysical entity, i.e. its *essence* cannot be grasped or apprehended by the senses. It is the purest of abstractions, perhaps the highest abstraction of which the human intelligence is capable. It is immutable, it is in captivity, or rather, it *cannot* "freely or independently manifest itself" (22), as García Ponce says. What we are capable of grasping or "perceiving" through the senses are "its signs, its reflections," its phenomena, or instead, what Aristotle and his followers called the *accidents*, until the arrival of Descartes and the modern philosophers. Because they are "contingent" or accidental, i.e. non essential, those "signs" and those "reflections" of the Being's essence "disappear". In other words, we are before that which the critic frequently designates in his article: the properties of "space," which is another way of saying the dichotomy of

"continuity" (essence/substance) and "discontinuity" (accident/contingency). Repeated references will be made to this point further on in the analysis.

As far as Octavio Paz' text is concerned, it can be stated that here is an anguished poet who feels and intuitively what the philosopher attempts to explain. In short, Octavio Paz is more of a poet than a philosopher. Be that as it may, when he affirms that "the image is a desperate recourse against the silence that invades us..." he is indicating to us poetically, precisely the same thing that García Ponce tells us philosophically ("it is nothing less than the impossibility for the [abstract / metaphysical / ontological] Being to manifest itself..."), or rather, that the essence of things ("terrible experience" / "silence") cannot be grasped even by the emotions or the poetic sensibilities. That the closest thing to "manifesting itself" is by way of the "image," and the latter, inasmuch as it attempts to be permanent never materializes, never becomes an immutable *essence*. In the words of García Ponce himself, they are the "signs" and "reflections" of the essence-reality of a given object, they are *not* the things in themselves. The quotation taken from Octavio Paz continues to be a *poetic* expression and, inasmuch as it is poetic, it cannot be transformed into criticism or literary theory, because, if that were the case, we would find ourselves before an *ad hominem* argument. That is to say, it would be equivalent to analyzing a poem with another poetic metaphor, and it would coincide with the axiom which legislates: "a defined word cannot be part of its own definition."

In the matter of the third cited text, which belongs to María Medina López, the one alluded to earlier as having a "pseudo-existentialist quality," it is exactly that: a pseudo-something. Anyone, poetically and romantically speaking, can utter a logical-sounding barbarism and everyone recognizes it as being a feverish or poetic digression, but there is a gigantic leap from the preceding, to seriously and philosophically declaring that "Only in nothing can you find everything," and constitutes an effrontery to critical and philosophical intellectuality. In a few words, in the physical order, as well as in the mathematical and in the philosophical, *nothingness* is nothingness and something cannot emerge from such a nothingness, because, by definition, nothingness is precisely the absence of essence, of that something. Moving into the field of theology or theodicy, it can be readily accepted that only the Supreme Being (God or the Divinity) can create something from nothingness. But this pertains to the order of faith and not to the domain of literary criticism or theory, nor to common sense. On the whole, this quotation "sounds" beautiful, because it is nothing more than a poetic expression.

Before fully directing our attention to Bruce-Novoa's text, and by way of summarizing what has been said up to this point regarding the epigraphs or quotations, one can already foresee the critical difficulties that Juan Bruce-Novoa will encounter in the initiation and development of his "theories" (*sic*) concerning the literary "space" that corresponds to Chicano literature. (It must be noted that the text, cited below, speaks of "theories" —not "theory", as one would have expected— regarding Chicano literary space. If this is what the critic truly meant to say, then there is even more doubt with respect to the validity of his argumentation. The reason is simple: it seems that one "theory" should be sufficient. If it is necessary to establish several "theories" on the same theme or object of study, it indicates that the focus —a theory— is not sufficient in and of itself. Therefore, we would have to doubt not only the embracing totality of the theory, but

also its logical validity).

Focusing on the analysis of the article, and proceeding step by step as proposed earlier, let us begin with the brief preamble, scarcely composed of fifteen lines. What is of importance is the final portion of this preamble, in which Bruce-Novoa cites María Medina López once again, paraphrasing her in the following way.

I would like to propose that *Chicano*, and therefore Chicano literature is *nothing*, the nothing of which María Medina López speaks. (Emphasis ours). (23)

And, to further reinforce the premise of departure, he adds:

Let me explain that in that sense, nothing is an ultimate good and in no way negative. I hope that the following presentation of my theories [*sic*] of literary space will open a positive dynamic approach to our literature, instead of the limiting ones that could damage it. (23)

Firstly, reiterating what was stated previously: "nothing [nothingness]" is "nothing [nothingness]," that the Being cannot materialize from "nothing [nothingness]," and, on the contrary, the Being cannot annihilate itself, and what is Being is Being and cannot be "nothing [nothingness]." The only thing that can happen to the Being, in as far as it is Being, is to transform itself or be transformed into another Being, but it cannot be annihilated. And that "nothing [nothingness]" is "nothing [nothingness]" and cannot even transform itself into itself nor into any other "nothing [nothingness]" whatsoever, because "nothing [nothingness]" has "nothing [nothingness]" into which it can transform itself, precisely because it is "nothing [nothingness]," and can by no means create the Being, because it does not have the power to actualize itself into Being, because it does not exist. Hence, to say that this "nothing [nothingness]" is an ultimate good and in no way negative" is simply an absurdity. The above be refuted with one stroke by stating that, if this "nothing [nothingness]" is something "positive," what is the "no-nothing," that is to say, the "Being"? Is it something "negative"? In other words, if "nothing [nothingness]" is the positive source from which the "positive" emanates, how is it that later it is claimed that things/beings (man in particular) are part of "discontinuity" and of "chaos," these latter of which the critic will later speak? This is a double contradiction: it is stated, on one hand, that "everything" can be found in "nothing [nothingness]" ("nothing [nothingness]" = the positive) and, on the other hand, that the Being, which proceeded from the "positive nothing [nothingness]," is "chaotic" because it is "discontinuous" (the positive = the chaotic).

Elaborating this concept a little further, and departing from this same absurd premise, the following observation can be made: if the Chicano and Chicano literature "are nothing," how is it they exist? What should be stated is that they "*were* nothing [nothingness]" (in the past tense), and, in logical accordance with his own premise, it would seem that the Chicano as well as his literature sprouted from (in a recent epoch?) "nothing [nothingness]." If, indeed, there is such a thing as Chicano literature it is because the Chicanos existed prior to their own literature and

that, without them, there is no proof of the existence of their own literature. Thus, even if there had been no Chicano literature before 1959 —year in which the "first" Chicano novel (*Pocho* by José Antonio Villarreal) was published, as some would have it— there had to have been Chicanos prior to that date. If this is accepted as a given fact and as something logical, it stands to reason that Chicano literature could not have sprouted from "nothing [nothingness]." It originated or was caused by the Chicano writers who preceded it and produced it.

But, if now we were to add to the above, as Bruce-Novoa states, that "the Chicano [also] is [was] nothing [nothingness]" we would be confronted with an even more serious and grave problem. If, as said previously, having to accept that "Chicano literature is [was] nothing [nothingness]" was arduous, it is more perplexing to accept that "the Chicano is [was] nothing [nothingness]," because the obligatory question arises immediately: who engendered the Chicano from "nothing [nothingness]"? From what kind of "nothing [nothingness]" did the Chicano emanate? In other words, the "nothing [nothingness]" from which Chicano literature emerged is not so difficult to understand because it involves a "nothing [nothingness]" that pre-existed already, i.e., the Chicano author. But, from what "nothing [nothingness]" did the Chicano author, maker of his own Chicano literature, emanate? From the same "nothing [nothingness]"? From another non-existent Chicano maker/creator? To admit this, as one is obliged to do, one would have to admit, at the same time, that this Chicano creator, which emanated from "nothing [nothingness]" to produce another "nothing [nothingness]" from which Chicano literature emerged, also had to be produced from "another nothing [nothingness]" (or is it the same "nothing [nothingness]"?), by a creator or engenderer that produced that "nothing [nothingness]" (is it the same "nothing [nothingness]" or another "nothing [nothingness]"?) from which this other Chicano creator emanated that produced from "nothing [nothingness]" (now which "nothing [nothingness]"?) the second Chicano creator, already created, which, in turn, produced "the Chicano" who from the former "nothing [nothingness]" would create the Chicano literature that we possess today. To be sure, all this gibberish or absurdity is too obscure to comprehend.

Undoubtedly, all of this is logical, because it conforms, more or less, to some syllogistic rules. The Greek sophists, too, it would seem, had their syllogistic rules. The problem resides, evidently, in the validity or falseness of the premises. If one departs from deficient or erroneous premises, the conclusions have to be erroneous also. This is the present case, in which, departing from an absurd premise, as Bruce-Novoa did —basing himself on María Medina López' premise regarding "nothing [nothingness]"— one arrives, necessarily and apodictically, at an absurd conclusion. And herein lies the problem, acceptance as a certitude, if only as a justification, that the absurd too has its own logic: the logic of the absurd. And, forcing the situation, it can be affirmed that, indeed, it does appear to be ludicrous or absurd, as has been demonstrated in the sophistic digression above —also based on Bruce-Novoa's premise.

Again, if the preamble to the critic's long article departs from this absurd premise, it stands to reason (from this moment on) that what follows the preamble will be a complete absurdity. And it appears to be this way, as has just been seen and will continue to be seen.

II

THE LITERARY SPACE

The first of the three parts into which Juan Bruce-Novoa's article is divided, bears the subtitle of "The Literary Space." The main premise of this section can be summarized in the following manner: citing Mircea Eliade and Juan García Ponce, the critic compares modern occidental man with ancient man (non-occidental?). The latter is characterized by having had and having lived a harmonious existence (= continuous), because his life and experience had a "place and a purpose in that order" (meaning a religious and cosmic order), while the former, "modern occidental man," finds himself "in the chaos of a reality (=discontinuous) void of any exterior superstructure [belief in/and harmony with the Being and The Totality--God?] that might give meaning to his life." (23)

In the following paragraph, and adhering to the ideas of several occidental thinkers cited by García Ponce, the critic states:

Modern man is a discontinuous being defined as such by his personal voyage towards death, moved along by sequential, unilateral time, and by his isolation within spatial relationships that only serve to underscore his particular individuality as this man and no other. (23)

For the moment, several observations can be made: 1) That this assertion can and seems to be gratuitous, because there is no serious evidence to substantiate such a statement, in other words, that "modern man [vs. ancient man] is a "discontinuous" being. 2) That the cause of that discontinuity ("defined as such") is "his personal voyage towards death" —for the simple reason that this "voyage towards death" is being made through "sequential, unilateral time"— also seems to be gratuitous for the same reason. These two first affirmations might or might not be exact, depending on the perspective selected (Eliade versus Bataille/Bruce-Novoa), inasmuch as it could be subjective / objective, relative / absolute or circular / linear. And 3) that what must be emphasized, as done repeatedly, is that each time Bruce-Novoa penetrates further into his "theories," he keeps adding new terms which were not mentioned in the preamble (=the state of affairs), and which were not indicated in the title itself of his study. The title of his article, "The Space of Chicano Literature," includes neither the concept of time nor the dichotomy of "continuity / discontinuity" which he utilizes so frequently. This will become more evident as the analysis progresses.

After having contrasted modern occidental man with ancient man (occidental/oriental?), perhaps, in order to prove his point he continues:

The first epigraph of my essay summarizes the problem. The contingency of discontinuous reality devours man's reflections and images so quickly that his only

perception of them is at best partial, fragmentary, resulting in an even more pernicious revelation of his self image as irrevocably lost and meaningless within that speeding, one way time progression. Man seeks to avail himself of recourses with which to combat the menace of chaotic discontinuity [of reality]. (23)

This passage is extremely important in the development of Bruce-Novoa's theory(ies) and, since it involves his paraphrasing of García Ponce's text, it is necessary to transcribe it, again, in order to be able to confirm both the implicit and the explicit comparisons.

It is nothing less than the impossibility for the Being to freely and independently manifest itself. Its *essence* is *found* in *reality* and that which we *perceive* from reality are its *signs*, its *reflections*, that very soon disappear devoured by *contingency*. (Emphasis ours). (22)

A careful reading of both texts reveals a fundamental disparity between them. As already indicated at the beginning of this study, García Ponce's passage is "ingenious" because of its compact and synthesizing content. It is lamentable that the critic could have distorted, misconstrued, and confused the otherwise extremely clear philosophical thinking of García Ponce's text.

Bruce-Novoa states: "the contingency of discontinuous reality devours man's reflections and images so quickly that...". This interpretation is antithetical to the meaning of García Ponce's text, because Bruce-Novoa inverts the philosophical, semantic subject/object binomial of the passage. According to García Ponce, the "essence" of the Being is imprisoned or prisoner within "reality," making it impossible for the Being to freely manifest itself. This posture is *objective* to an extreme. Bruce-Novoa's position is antithetical to the preceding, because he states that reality is objectively "discontinuous," for the simple reason that it is "contingent." What is "contingent" (García Ponce's text says nothing with regard to "discontinuity") for the Mexican thinker are the "signs and reflections" of the essential reality in as far as it is perceived by us, the subjective thinkers.

In reference to the second concept of the passage, "resulting in an even more pernicious revelation of his self image as irrevocably lost," it is a combination that Bruce-Novoa creates from García Ponce's and Octavio Paz' texts in addition to his own inventions, which he attributes to García Ponce, injecting into it a confusion not found in the exceedingly clear original text. Briefly, García Ponce speaks to us of the immutability of the essence of the Being (essential / transcendental) which we are not capable of actualizing as a vital experience, except as a subjective intellectual abstraction. The "signs" and "reflections" are the phenomenological perception of this reality-essence ("that which we perceive of it"), it is not the reality-essence in and of itself. Consequently, these "signs" and "reflections," which perceived subjectively, will be "devoured" by the "contingency" of reality (not by the essence of that same reality), since "contingency" refers to the *accidents* of reality and *not* to its *essence*. Thus, and as a summary of what has just been said, one can establish two clarifying equations: 1) objective "reality" = (immutable) essence + contingency or (mutable) accidents, and 2) I-thinking or seeing (subjective) being = (mutable) perception + (objective / mutable) signs/accidents.

Bruce-Novoa attempts to make us believe —perhaps because he did not read his mentor carefully— that the "contingency of discontinuous reality [tautology] devours man's reflections and images," confusing and inverting the terms: the subject for the object (and vice versa) and the cause for the effect (and vice versa). In short, it seems he read García Ponce backwards. This inversion and confusion are caused, apparently, by collapsing two dissimilar, though related, quotations, García Ponce's (philosophical) and Octavio Paz' (poetic), into one sentence. And, as can be seen by the attentive discernor, philosophy and the poetic vision cannot be intertwined when one is attempting to do critical analysis or to elaborate a (pseudo)scientific theory[ies]. But these digressions have nothing to do with literary criticism and theory. At least not yet, as will be seen.

Next, focusing exclusively on the terms "continuity" and "discontinuity" (neither term necessarily relates to the title's concept of "space"), Bruce-Novoa goes to great lengths to try to convince us that, if there is a possibility for modern "man" to stop the "discontinuity" in relation to things and life it would be in the context of six possible situations or elements, markers or blocks ("spaces?"): religion, childhood, death, eroticism, mysticism, and art. We would like to analyze each point in detail, but it would be too lengthy to do so. An effort will be made to discuss the essential aspect of each category to ascertain if there is a logical consistency and, finally, if there is applicability with respect to Chicano literature. This, after all, should be the main concern.

Bruce-Novoa begins by citing two modern thinkers, Mircea Eliade and George Bataille, and patently he embraces the arguments of the latter. The critic limits himself to stating that the conception and inclination of the Rumanian thinker Mircea Eliade (*The Sacred and the Profane*) is that "modern man" has broken ties with the religious "superstructure" which maintained him *ab origine* in total "continuity." Breaking these ties, he now finds himself alienated not only with the Totality, but with himself and other beings. Thus, he must reclaim those ties of continuity again, if he is to survive in a normal state. This is none other than the theory advanced by some psychologists, better known as collective psychology, such as the Swiss Carl G. Jung (*El hombre y sus símbolos*, 15-98). Bruce-Novoa, it appears, is not an advocate for Eliade's posture and, instead, sustains himself on the theory of the Frenchman George Bataille (*L'Erotisme*). Apparently, he has taken the six points or blocks alluded to earlier from Bataille by way of García Ponce.

With respect to the first block or "space," *religion*, he immediately discards it upon affirming that:

Religion, at least in the Christian sects, justifies and perpetuates man's discontinuous historicity and spatial solitude by projecting it past death into eternity with promises of life everlasting for the particular individual. Religion may be secure order as Eliade sees it, but its concentration on the individual makes it a discontinuous space, and therefore chaotic in the last analysis. (24)

This text contains at least one fundamental contradiction and, also, a simplistic knowledge of Christian-religious theological doctrine which has survived "continuously" during a "space" of twenty centuries. The principle of "that which can be affirmed gratuitously, can be denied gratuitously" is easily applicable in this case. That "religion, at least in the Christian sects, justifies and perpetuates man's discontinuous historicity and spatial solitude by projecting it past death into eternity with promises of life everlasting for the particular individual," (24) is a formidable statement which must be proved without remission. This proof or evidence is not to be found anywhere in the critic's text. It is regrettable, if not intellectually disrespectful, because the objective here is to attempt to establish a "theory[ies]" regarding "Chicano literary space" in which life and religion, for Christian as well as pre-Christian, played, and continues to play, a transcendental role. That "religion" (re-ligation with the Supreme Being) teaches that life is earthly, temporal, and finite is true. That it affirms that there is another life which is eternal, unlimited, and "continuous," is similarly true. And that life should be seen as an antechamber in preparation for the other one, is also true. But that "religion justifies and perpetuates man's discontinuous historicity and spatial solitude [?] of man [modern or not]" and that "its concentration on the individual makes it a discontinuous space, and therefore chaotic," is a "discontinuous" (intellectual space?), bold, and aprioristic reasoning on the part of the critic.

Several examples can be utilized to refute the second part of the quotation. Citing, without analyzing them —because they are common patrimony—, theoretical cases only, and leaving aside the ritualistic ones (for Christianity), such as "original sin" versus the "New Adam," that of the "economy of the salvation of Christ," and especially that of the "theory"/doctrine and practice of the "Mystical Body of Christ." These postures, and numerous others, such as the ritualistic ones that could be adduced here, are based on the "continuity" not only of ancient man, but also of "modern man" (occidental or not) and a "communitarian" structure, and not on the "individual" and "isolated/alienated" one of man with "the others" and with "the Other," linking this "discontinuous" life (according to Bruce-Novoa) with the other "continuous" one (according to Eliade?). The doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ, in particular, presupposes, on one hand, the integration of the parts into a totality, parallel to the "individual members" that integrate the "complete body," in the sense of unity. And, on the other hand, it is the "dissolution" of individuality within the totality, thereby, making alienation and chaos impossible, as Bruce-Novoa indicates. Be that as it may, the religious Christian doctrine or posture is in complete conflict with what the critic (and perhaps George Bataille) attacks as "chaotic [space], in the last analysis." There is an implicit contradiction in this text, but, because it is related to the fifth section or block to be studied —mysticism— it will be discussed later.

The second block or "space," as far as the underlying alternative between "continuity" and "discontinuity," concerns *childhood*.

Childhood is the first space of continuity (temporal and spatial simultaneity, total unity) experienced by man. Childhood is a space of free floating movement within which the child is the assigner of roles, the transformer of reality, unlimited by the physical or mental barriers adults accept as normal. Childhood ends when the child becomes aware of his limited, discontinuous existence, a realization accompanying the predominance of reason over

imagination. To return to childhood is impossible within sequential time, but the memory lingers on in man and may well be the source of his desire to recapture the unity within continuity that as an adult has left behind. (24)

At first glance, the paragraph which Bruce-Novoa dedicates to childhood, as "the first space of continuity [?] [temporal and spatial simultaneity]," flows well and appears to be logical, but if pondered a little, that logic vanishes progressively. According to him, the child's "imagination" predominates over reason and, as a result, is not limited by the barriers that reason imposes on modern man. "Childhood is a space of free floating movement," in which the child can assign roles to others and to himself and in this manner [subjectively?] transform reality, without barriers. The adult, because of the limitations that reason imposes on him, does not have that privilege or power, by now lost, consequently, he navigates in "discontinuity." Only through "memory," and in an unsatisfactory manner, is he able to return to childhood in order to recapture in some way that lost "continuity."

This situation does not seem as simple as Bruce-Novoa would have one believe. On one hand, that the power of the "imagination" is a guarantee of "continuity," and "reason" as the cause of "discontinuity," does not follow, nor has it been proven scientifically nor philosophically. The opposite position could be defended just as easily. For instance, the "imagination," fantasy, dreams, etcetera, are "free," as the critic says, but that "liberty" is no less "chaotic" in many cases. Psychologists or psychiatrists can attest to this. On the contrary, it can be readily stated that "reason" is the faculty which, by nature, establishes "order" within "chaos." This faculty, which establishes logic, is an attribute of the adult, not of the child.

And, in reference to adult literature, one can observe, above all in the Baroque and Surrealism epochs—the latter of these literary movements of recent and "modern" appearance—that this "free floating" of which the critic speaks, frequently becomes "free chaos" (our words). On the other hand, if, indeed, it is true that children can freely "assign roles," one must remember that those same children, once at play, fictitious or not, are capable of creating a "discontinuous chaos" that would be difficult for an adult, "reasonable" or logical, to equal. One has only to think of, for the concrete world of the child, a birthday or Christmas party where the child's toys belong to him\her alone ("individual / discontinuous"?) and not the other ("communitarian / universal / continuous"?).

The third block or "space" the critic selects to present the "continuity" versus "discontinuity" disjunctive is *death*. Here, once again, the thesis is not convincing nor does the critic fare any better. He begins by stating that "Death is the most obvious of the possible spaces of continuity open to the adult" (24). If there is not a mistake in the general interpretation of the long essay, we have the strong impression that the critic is not preoccupied with religion, nor the great beyond, nor the Totality. He does not embrace Eliade's theory of *re-ligation* with the Totality, for the simple reason that "modern man"—and the critic is a modern man—cut the ties with the "continuity" that existed in this life and that characterized ancient man. If this is the premise of departure, as can be deduced from the critic's work, it follows that "death" (the cessation of life? the great beyond?) does not preoccupy, nor should it preoccupy "modern man" in general, most

particularly the Chicano. Consequently, death is the cessation of life and, being as such, death is, antonomastically speaking, the "space of nothing [nothingness]" (our words), that is to say, emptiness. If life is reality or "discontinuous space," according to the critic, it follows that death is "non-space," neither continuous nor discontinuous, because the reality or concept of "space" is something positive, something "real" and cannot be identified with "nothing" (= non-space).

The referred text consists of two parts, one is taken from García Ponce and the other is Bruce-Novoa's own elaboration of the same text by García Ponce. The two quotations are cited to draw attention to the lack of agreement between them.

[García Ponce states that] in order to break the discontinuity that, upon being thrust into [the reality of] life which separates us from nature and the others, the first immediate road is death, which returns us to impersonal continuity. (Translation ours). (24)

Bruce-Novoa elaborates the cited text and interprets it in the following manner:

Death destroys the particular manifestation of life, discontinuous man, but does not touch the impersonal, continuous spirit of life, rather it [death? the spirit of life?] reveals it [the impersonal?] in its repetitive cycle and its interdependence with death. (The text in brackets is ours). (24)

García Ponce's intertext is very lucid. There are three parts or phases in the life cycle of man: birth, life, and death. When "we are thrust into the world" (= birth) "we break" the continuity with "nature" and the "others." If this is so (doubtful in our opinion), in order to be able to depart from life, the resolution would be death "that returns us to impersonal continuity" (also doubtful in our opinion). It is obvious that García Ponce established a "continuity" *before* ("upon being thrust into life") and *after* ("death returns us to impersonal continuity") from "discontinuous life." In other words, death is a return to *pre-life*. This cycle, though clear and easy to understand, does not explain anything to us regarding that "space" prior to or after life. It is suggested that it is "something" ("impersonal continuity"), but one is not told anything in relation to that "something." Thus, the manner in which this affirmation is expressed does not allow it to be acknowledged as acceptable in an academic and critical study.

Something similar, though lacking García Ponce's cycle, is presented by Bruce Novoa in the text previously cited, with the gravity that the syntax is deficient and confusing. The critic tells us that "death destroys the particular manifestation of life [...], but does not touch the impersonal, the continuous spirit of life, rather it [the continuous spirit of life/death?] reveals it in its repetitive cycle and its interdependence with death." (24)

In the first place, the text is somewhat perplexing, because "death," clearly the subject, becomes the circumstantial complement of the sentence itself. Secondly, this grammatical imprecision is difficult to understand in that, with death, personal and individual life ceases to exist. That same death, however, respects, "reveals," and establishes an "interdependence" with the "continuous spirit of life." It seems, according to the text, there is a particular, personal, physical, biological

and material life (*hic et nunc*) "discontinuous" and there is another that is universal, impersonal, and spiritual (*in morte et post mortem*) and this second spiritual and impersonal existence, because of a "repetitive cycle" interdependent with "death" (between death and death!), establishes a "space" of continuity. Or rather, that death is the beginning and the end of that "continuity," and that in between both exists a "continuous spirit of life." Thus, it is difficult to establish a principle of logic (= discontinuous space?) in this manner, unless a theological treatise on existence subsequent to death is being proposed here.

The critic concludes with the following words:

Death, however, is little consolation to man because it makes the images invisible, and of course the disadvantages of its permanence are obvious [!]. As a space of liberation it is a last resort. (24)

That death "is little consolation" to man is known by everyone, unless one is talking about the saints or those desperate individuals who have given up on life, but that the reason for this disconsolate state is that death "makes the images invisible," is no longer very apparent to anyone. He who dies, ceases to exist, and not only his own "images" disappear, but his entire being also vanishes and becomes "invisible," unless one admits to the existence of the Great Beyond and eternal life, which is not obvious in the critic's text. But this is a separate theme altogether. Now, if with all of this, the critic is preparing us for the *application* of his theory(ies), v.g., to the poem "El Louie," and he wants to insinuate that this poem does not involve the "images" Louie Rodríguez himself had in life, but the images that the poet José Montoya reveals regarding the life of the pachuco Louie, then there is a reference to two human lives: the "discontinuous" life (according to the critic) of the artist, because he is a real person, who conceives the ("continuous") image of the deceased, who, in and of himself, has ceased to be real, and the "continuous" life of the deceased who stopped conceiving "discontinuous" real images, his own, as well as others. And, clearly, this has nothing to do with the continuity or discontinuity of the work of art.

In a few words, we believe that there is tremendous imagination in this passage, there is much pseudo-philosophy, and very little literary theory. The only thing that "death" does is to sever the normal "continuity" (not the fictitious "discontinuity") of life, because life, by nature and essence, is a continuous reality. Life ceases to continue when it desists and, therefore, the "continuous" process of existence is discontinued. And that death re-establishes "impersonal continuity," etcetera, is a pure idealist abstraction, because the only continuity that death can offer is continuity in nothing[ness] and of nothing, or, if one believes in eternity, to establish absolute continuity within the infinite and eternal bosom of the divine essence. If one accepts this, as do many Chicanos, as part of their existential and cultural continuity, then one can talk in serious terms with respect to the process of the future spiritual, unlimited, and perfect (absolutely continuous in "space" and "time") life. But, naturally, the critic is not referring to this matter, because he himself states: "As a space of liberation [of life] it [death] is a last resort." In addition, we are compelled to emphasize that the "space of liberation" is a difficult concept, because it is puzzling for us to comprehend that this "liberation" has its own "space."

The fourth division or "space" regarding the subject of continuity and discontinuity (of space?) is dedicated to *eroticism*. Once again, Bruce-Novoa's argument is rooted in the ideas of the frequently mentioned scholars, George Bataille and Juan García Ponce. The latter affirms that, in "eroticism", "a union with the other is realized, as well as with life, that takes us out of time and discontinuity that ceases for the Being," (24) in other words, time and discontinuity prevent "the Being from manifesting itself freely." And Bruce-Novoa adds that the "disadvantage" of eroticism (=the sexual act in this case) is the "rapid vanishing" of the erotic experience. He continues saying that:

In that moment, man dissolves as does the world, and when both are reformulated, man —sensitive man— comes away with a new insight into so-called reality. (24)

The central meaning of the text speaks of the brevity of the "moment" of pleasure and the "intensity" of the erotic act by which and in which the human being "dissolves as does the world." This momentaneous and "dissolutive" act, according to Bruce-Novoa, is the key to restraining the "discontinuity" of/and in life and the world, and, in this manner, seizing the "continuity" from both. After this "momentaneous" erotic act, man and the world "are reformulated" upon returning to consciousness and gain a new "insight" of "reality," whatever the latter may be.

The concept makes sense in and of itself and at first glance, but the questions begin to surface: if in this brief "moment" the human being dissolves in himself and in/with the other and both in/with the world, how is it possible that this act is "continuity" (= momentaneous or anti-life) within "discontinuity" (= vital permanence)? What kind of new subjective "insight" of vital "reality" can man have concerning the same objective ("discontinuous") reality that has not changed in and of itself? How is it possible that "man and the other," upon dissolving in the erotic act, can also dissolve along with them a "world" that is objective and *transcendent* to the personal and subjective human experience of that same "world" and the personal dissolves? This is sheer ("discontinuous") disparity between subject and object and, therefore, fictitious, if not "unreal."

But the text continues:

[...] when man dissolves into pure intensity, losing the central and centralizing "I", time stops [...]. The countless analogies of the sexual act and death have their basis in the shared, common space of continuity. Both are a violation of the personal, discontinuous being, impersonalising it, making it participate in the undifferentiated continuity of nothing[ness]: simultaneous everything. (25)

In the dissolutive sexual moment, because of the intensity of the emotional act and the de-centralization of the I, "time stops or ceases to exist" at that precise (eternal?, eternizing?, eternized?) "moment." Once again questions emerge: is the critic implying that art and the artistic experience are similar to the erotic act in which the observer, listener, reader dissolves in

the contemplation and fruition of the work of art? This is a crude possibility. Or is it that the erotic act (by definition "momentaneous" and, at the same time, "continuous") is similar to the creative act of the artist in whose process the notion and awareness of time are lost? In both cases, does the flow of time, space and the world cease? Or is it the personal (non-impersonal) experience that deceives one into believing that it is the (impersonal = transcendental) object that truly ceases to exist for us.

The critic takes a mortal leap when he discloses that "the countless analogies of the sexual act and death have their basis in the shared, common space of continuity." (25) This proves nothing, because, in the first place, as has already been emphasized when discussing *death*, we are not convinced that death is, at least for the deceased, a "space of continuity." In the second place, if it were so, the critic would have to explain how the sexual act, basically "momentaneous," and death basically a "permanent" experience or fact, can be equated. But even if this analogy (undoubtedly fictitious) could be accepted, why not extend it to other dissolutive acts and experiences, such as drunkenness, drug addiction, deliriousness, madness (momentaneous or permanent, "continuous" or "discontinuous"), tantrum-throwing (especially in children = "continuity"?), the emotional intensity of assassination, etcetera?

And Bruce-Novoa closes by saying "Both [the sexual act and death] are a violation of the personal, discontinuous being, impersonalising it, making it participate in the undifferentiated continuity of nothing[ness]: simultaneous everything." (25) Analysis has been made of the "theoretical" posture of the critic at the beginning of this study, in the section relating to nothing/nothingness and there is no need to repeat it. But it is observed that the only objective "analogy" (= objective identity), evident between the sexual act and death, is the dissolution of the subjective I, which appears to be a kind of instinct, a desirable, natural, and even advisable instinct towards the dissolution of the vital being, in other words, suicide.

The fifth division or "space" in reference to the topic of continuity and discontinuity is *mysticism*. From among the sections or "spaces" presented thus far, this one, apparently, makes the most sense, although the "theoretical" applicability of this "space" in the context of Chicano literature is yet to be determined. The brief passage will be cited.

The mystic also seeks to dissolve into a transcendent being or into a state of absolute unity with the Other, sometimes called God or the world or the total spirit. Under any name it means unity without limits, free of divisive particularities. Like in the other spaces, the particular individual becomes impersonal in the dissolution of the self. (25)

The difference which can be detected between this passage, in comparison with the others, is that the true "mystical experience" is enduring, permanent and, therefore, truly "continuous." The actual "dissolution" into a "state of absolute unity with the Other" offers the guarantee not only of not losing one's individual subjective identity, but also of contemplating one's limited personal existence. But it should be added that the mystic who dissolves in the essence of the Other, does not do so in a "temporary fainting spell of the moment," as in the sexual act (sensitiveness), instead it is similar to an eternal present that is a vital (spiritual) pre-figuration of an eternal

future. Here, indeed, can the possibility of "continuity" (non-discontinuity) within the vital reality of the present be conceived logically, theologically, and ontologically. Additionally, the enduring mystical act, although as "intense" as the sexual act, is not equal to the latter, for the simple reason that it transcends the implicit and inherent temporal "discontinuity" of eroticism. Furthermore, if one accepts eroticism as an instrument for stopping the "discontinuity" of the chaotic vital reality, one can easily reject the previous posture vis-à-vis the first division or "space" regarding *religion*, which has already been discussed.

And now the sixth and last division or "space" will be considered. It refers to and directly concerns art and, in particular, *literature*. This section is the most clear and by far the best developed of the six explicated texts of the entire article. Bruce-Novoa explains partially:

The artist tears the world and man from discontinuous reality and converts them into images or words; reality dies, becomes impersonal outside of sequential time, and that other life of continuity is revealed. The images are fixed in the permanence where, free of the devouring flow of time, they can manifest themselves, offering man the opportunity to experience again and again his own reflections in them. (25)

This passage is a model of how literary analysis, criticism, and theory should be written: with precision and clarity. Utilizing brevity of words, this quotation outlines the function of the "artist," the "reader," the creative "process," and of the "nature" of art. Prior to and afterward, the critic discusses one of the visions or functions of art, citing and elaborating a brief text by García Ponce. Both have been transcribed:

[Art] is justly the continuity of the being revealed to those who fix their attention, by means of a solemn ritual, on the death of a discontinuous being. (25)

The victim of the sacrifice is a particular individual, but it becomes impersonal in its permanence, in its liberation from movement to which all individuals are chained, though its surface remains that of the individual. (Translation ours). (25)

Both passages speak of a metaphorical analogy between the process and nature of art and the function of the sacredness of the artistic ritual. Although this simile is very fascinating, nonetheless, it is a dangerous device to use within the context of literary criticism, because there is a tendency toward producing literature instead of analyzing it, as has already been demonstrated several times. Setting aside this point for the moment, we will concentrate on the texts. The first quotation, by García Ponce, can be summarized by stating that the artist, similar to a priest in the sacrifice of a victim, gives death to ("the sign of") the "discontinuous" or real being and transmutes it into ("the essence of") the "continuous" or artistic being. In other words, through the process of the artistic ritual it becomes permanent, or rather, the "discontinuous" becomes "continuous."

The elaboration by Bruce-Novoa of this passage is clear and precise. However, when he says — as he has said on other occasions — that the "space of continuity of art" is what is of interest to

us, in this essay, he leaves the reader perplexed once again. Because, if considered carefully, it is not the same to say "the space of continuity" (=Bruce-Novoa) as the "continuity of the Being" (=García Ponce). "Continuity" or "discontinuity" are properties / characteristics of the Being, not of space. It could be said, with more exactitude, that it is a characteristic of *time*. But, because time intersects and interlocks with space, like two coordinates or siamese beings, it confers to the latter the characteristic of continuity or discontinuity. More appropriately because of *movement*, upon which time and space travel, it permits these two to have continuity and/or discontinuity. The Mexican philosopher, Eli de Gortari, in his *Introducción a la lógica dialéctica/Introduction to Dialectical Logic* (1979), explains it in the following manner:

Continuity and discontinuity are, therefore, distinguishable moments, but not distinct, from the inseparable unity of the all. Continuity is the course of the continuous changes of the discontinuous moments interlocked in tight unity with the whole. (Translation ours). (59)

The Being rises above these three elements and for this reason it is more just, logical, and precise to say "the continuity of the Being," as García Ponce states, rather than "the space of continuity" of art, as Bruce-Novoa states. Truthfully, this last expression does not contain any logic. Continuity has no space. Even figuratively speaking, it is nonsensical.

The critic continues to review the visual, auditory and literary arts. He makes an inventory of them, but speaks exclusively of art appreciation, and includes neither the artist nor the work of art. In other words —the authors of this study will make use of figurative language— he speaks to us of ingestion and digestion (perception of the observer/listener/reader) but not about the gestation and gestation (process of the work) nor of the gested or procreated (product). At the conclusion of the long paragraph he touches lightly upon the nature of literary art when he says:

The permanent, fixed nature of writing is exactly the means of saving them [images] from sequential time, of depersonalizing them, of allowing them to become art where they are simultaneous. (26)

It is agreed that, through literary "writing" —as a means of making images "permanent"— the latter are rescued from the "discontinuity of time," devourer of things. However, this medium is not necessarily an absolute remedy for giving them "permanence" and for assuring that art will endure and will challenge time. The "written fixation" (or sculptural, pictoric, musical), is indeed a guarantee of permanence, but it does not follow that it is *in perpetuum*, as it appears to be suggested here. There are writings (and other signs) that are not considered art and, nevertheless, "remain fixed" against the voracity of time. As examples to illustrate what is being said, one could identify many works of plastic art, as in the case of countless paintings, statues, cathedrals, etcetera, from the historical past, in which, in addition to esthetic values, other elements not artistic, such as alterations or "lesions" were also permanently engraved and "fixed." These "lesions simultaneously" fix, rescue and reveal the non-artistic images in a work without being art.

III

CHICANO LITERARY SPACE

The first part of this study has been limited to what Bruce-Novoa himself called a "lengthy introduction." He expressed it in the following manner:

This lengthy introduction was necessary so that we —you who reads and I— can have some basis for understanding, *though it be ambiguous at times*. (Emphasis ours). (27)

The introduction consists of five pages. It is not necessarily the number of pages that are questionable, but rather the quantity of elements, sometimes disparate, that make the introduction troublesome. The critic himself admits this upon confessing that it is, or can be, "ambiguous at times." We believe this ambiguity has been proven repeatedly in the first two chapters of our analysis. The worst part is that this "ambiguity" continues in the following pages (Cárdenas, "The Literary Space"). An effort will be made to underscore, as well as to substantiate if this so-called "theory" of "Chicano literary space" is applicable or not to the same literature in question, as the critic proposes to do. The plan to follow in this third division is the same one that was of assistance to us in the preceding part: a step by step analysis of Bruce-Novoa's text.

The first section of his work was entitled "Literary Space," in general. This second section is called "*Chicano* Literary Space," the focus becoming more specific. And, although it is more specific, the critic continues to employ the same basic nomenclature: "space" (and "time"), "order" versus "chaos," "continuity" versus "discontinuity," the "particular" versus the "universal," the "individual" versus the "impersonal," and the "image" versus "reality." Bruce-Novoa begins this second section of his lengthy study by stating:

Chicanos have been especially *victimized* by the *chaos* of their *surroundings* in that even the fleeting *reflections* of man *are not* of us. We can find ourselves in pieces of art that achieve *universality*; that is to say that the basic human quality of continuity which such pieces reveal *will reflect our own humanity*. (Emphasis ours). (27)

Clearly, he is referring to the socio-historical context ("their surroundings") and, at the same time, to the literary text ("fleeting reflections") where one could find the Chicano during the decade of the 60s and first half of the 70s. He alludes to the fact that the only representation of the literary image of the Chicano that could be found previously was in official literature, that is to say, the vision which the Anglo-Saxon had of the Chicano and that the former projected in his literature, since mid-nineteenth century. This is an historical fact which cannot be doubted today. However, setting aside the historical aspect, let us examine, from a literary, critical, and theoretical perspective, the concepts with which Bruce-Novoa expresses his thoughts and the

manner in which he utilizes them, since this is the main concern of the study.

By declaring that "the Chicanos have been especially victimized by the chaos of their surroundings," the statement is, historically and socially correct, but by placing the emphasized terms in the context of his literary "theory," it does not cease to create confusion in the mind of the reader. For example, it can be stated, in common and ordinary language, that a person has been "victimized," meaning that "things went badly," "one suffered an unforeseen accident," etcetera. But in the context of Bruce-Novoa's theoretical article, the term "victimized" acquires a much more justifiable, exact, and elevated level, signifying to "suffer a ritual sacrifice".

That it is the second meaning the one that the critic should employ in this quotation can be demonstrated by the frequency with which Bruce-Novoa, as well as García Ponce —whom he cites several times— discuss this type of sacrificial "victimization." It occurs, by analogy, in the process and function of art. García Ponce expresses that "art is justly the continuity of the revealed being to those that fix their attention, by means of a solemn ritual, on the death of a discontinuous being," (27) and Bruce-Novoa paraphrases him in this manner: "The victim of the sacrifice is a particular individual." (27)

Something similar occurs with the term "chaos" in the phrase "victimized by the chaos of their surroundings." The "chaos" is caused by a social condition based on racial segregation and economic exploitation. Nonetheless, within the context of his literary "theory," this chaos no longer refers to a social condition, but to the philosophical and anti-artistic "reality" which is characterized by the devouring "discontinuity" of man. In short, as in the previous example, the readers are confronted with two very disparate interpretative levels of that "reality," also disparate, which Bruce-Novoa mentions frequently.

The second part of the same quotation fares no better. It states that "we can find ourselves in the pieces of art that achieve universality," referring to some images with respect to the Chicanos that can be found in various literary works not written by Chicanos, but by Anglo-Saxons. With the same stroke of a pen, he claims that these "pieces" are only "fleeting reflections of man [that] are not of us," but that, nevertheless, and at the same time, "reflect our own humanity."

He indicates to us, on the one hand, that the Chicanos can recognize themselves in some pieces, ("fleeting reflections") of their lives as Chicanos, projected and fixed as such by the Anglo-Saxon pen, that, ironically and antithetically, "victimized" the Chicano in a social "chaos," caused by the Anglo-Saxon. From this "chaos" (=radical discontinuity) "pieces" of images of the Chicano can spring forth that "achieve universality," reflecting "our own humanity." Undoubtedly, his own nomenclature, the basis for his supposed "theory" of Chicano literary space, results contradictory *in terminis* for himself and for the reader.

In the second part of the same paragraph, it seems he wants to correct himself by explaining this contradiction, but does not succeed. He states:

However, the surface image is still a particularity, and until recently those surfaces —and

the page of a book is a surface— excluded us in a dual fashion: 1) it was not a Chicano particularity being sacrificed and universalized on that surface; and 2) with respect to the surfaces themselves, they were not readily available to Chicano artists. The sense of general alienation from Anglo American society was reinforced in the arts. (27)

By beginning this quotation with the adverb "however" the critic indicates that the previous, even if true, remains in a subordinate position. Or that there is an intrinsic limitation. And this limitation consists in that, even though "we can find ourselves in the pieces of art that achieve universality [...] will reflect our own humanity," (27) the fact remains that the "surface image" continues to be "a particularity," that is to say, it continues to be "discontinuous" (=fragmented, de-humanized). Unless the critic clarifies the concepts further, one is faced with a serious contradiction: on the one hand, those unknown "pieces" of art can achieve a level of "universality," with (Chicano) human qualities, and, on the other hand, because they appear represented by "surface images" and "particularities," they can only be "discontinuous" (=de-humanized).

Another confusion which the reader has to confront is that, as in other occasions, Bruce-Novoa plays with the terms and concepts, jumping from one level to the other. For example, the term "surface" was coined in the context of the transformational grammar of the well-known linguist Noam Chomsky, among others, upon making the distinction between "surface structure" and "deep structure," with which, undoubtedly, the critic is familiarized. Here, it now assumes the technical literary meaning of "surface image," to underscore the "superficiality" ("particularity," "discontinuous," or lack of essence) versus the "deep structure," ("universality," "continuity," literary essence) of the projection. From this technical level, without preparing the reader, the critic does a strange somersault upon telling us in a non-restrictive or dependent clause that "the *page* of a book is [also] a surface." To clearly understand the first use of the term "surface," the reader's intellect has to do linguistic acrobatics and, suddenly, the critic confronts the reader with "the page of a book is [also] a surface." Unless the book cover or printed letter is considered to be art, this does not make any sense. As the critic himself indicates, there is a lot of "ambiguity" in all of this.

In the following paragraph he discusses how, with the appearance of the Chicano movement of the 60s and 70s, the Chicanos were searching for the art with which they could identify. At the beginning, everything Mexican was accepted and embraced and everything Anglo-Saxon was discarded. Later, as the Chicano became aware that he was neither one nor the other, he searched for a "space" or middle term between both. The Chicano had been previously known as Mexican-American. Since he was neither, he would have to be the space between both, that is to say, the *place* between Mexican and American, which corresponded to the *hyphen* between Mexican and American. By eliminating the hyphen (-), a void or emptiness (= "nothing[ness]") remains that must be re-filled. There, in that exact place, Chicano "space" ("nothing[ness]") will be developed. The critic explains it in his own words:

I propose that we are the space [not the hyphen] between the two [Mexican-American], the intercultural nothing of that space. We are continually expanding that space, pushing

the two out and apart as we build our own separate reality [discontinuous art?], while at the same time creating strong bonds of interlocking tension that hold the two in relationship. Each Chicano work opens a space for its existence and adds to the space of Chicano art as well as Art itself. (27-28)

This is a genial, graphic conception on the part of the critic, although not precisely original. However, it is lamentable that he injects a disparity, causing, as in other occasions, confusion. In the first place, as indicated previously, the concept of "space," which has been manipulated in so many different ways throughout Bruce-Novoa's theoretical essay, now takes on another connotation: that of typography. In other words, that of physical (and, at the same time, fictitious) space between two letters, syllables, or words. In the second place, that "space," simultaneously spatial, conceptual and fictitious, is equivalent simply to the word "place," as such. The place that the hyphen (-) occupied. Stated another way, that from a highly theoretical concept, it is reduced, by means of a visual image, to a common expression. And, finally, once again one becomes desoriented in pseudo-philosophical concepts, when, for the third time in the same expression, the key word "space" is equated with intercultural "nothing[ness]." It does not matter that the critic claims that "we are continually expanding that space, pushing the two [Mexican and American] out and apart" while, at the same time, bringing them together and "interlocking them" to create the Chicano's own literary intercultural "space" (=place). In the final analysis, that "space"/place is "nothing[ness]" (= the original nothing) and nothing, contrary to what is being said here, is nothing less than nothing.

It is necessary to clarify that we understand perfectly what Bruce-Novoa is attempting to say. However, the arbitrary handling of semantic changes attributed to the same linguistic term, is not permitted in a theoretical critic because, by doing so, he/she is indicating that there is neither coherence nor clear concepts in regard to what he is attempting to accomplish. A critical analysis is not an open or inconclusive poem or short story that the reader, similar to a re-creator, is obligated to conclude or close. No, the critic must speak and present with clarity and precision those concepts that are the utensils of work. If that "space" is a "continuous nothing" (*contradictio in terminis*), it should be clarified by means of scientific and philosophical explanations. If it is not done in this manner, because it is not achievable nor possible to do, then, the critic is suggesting fictitious nebulosities. And this is unacceptable.

What we have just stated is not subjective capriciousness.

Observe what Bruce-Novoa himself states:

We must avoid classifications that would attempt to define the characteristics of Chicano Art. (I am fully, joyfully and perversely cognizant of the application to my own work). The critic should accept his role as just another force on the interplay of tensions. (28)

This paragraph, which appears almost at the end of the theoretical part of his article, is extremely fascinating. In agreement with the critic to a certain measure we can assert, in popular language, that "classifications," like comparisons, are loathsome. However, from the onset, the stated

intention and purpose was to establish a "theory," that is to say, to develop a group of "classified" and systematized concepts. In any theory, be it in the natural, applied, literary or philosophical sciences, classifications are obligatory, whether it is liked or not. Linnaeus, in the natural sciences, and Aristotle and Kant, in the philosophical, are widely known historical examples. But the most shocking aspect, because it was unexpected, especially after the long pages in which there are promises of a "theory," is to be told, at the end, that "we must avoid classifications that would attempt to define the characteristics of Chicano Art." The question remains, why try to elaborate a "theory" with regard to "Chicano Space" and Chicano literature? We have to admit without subtleties that, in addition to being left with the urge to know, we are confronted with a contradiction of the first magnitude. Because, in reality, the critic, who has been promising a theory, finds himself in the position of being unable to justify his assertion. The only thing he offers as proof of justification is that "the critic should accept his role [ambiguous?] as just another force in the interplay of tensions."

Approaching the conclusion of the theoretical part, the critic devotes a paragraph to *one* of the classified "characteristics" (which he himself prohibits) of Chicano literature: the modality of its *language*.

As for our language, it too [?] is neither Spanish nor English, nor bilingual. We do not go from one to the other, nor do we keep them separate. The two are in dynamic tension creating a new, interlingual "language." Ricardo Sánchez calls it tertiary principle. I prefer the term interlingual, because as Ricardo himself has demonstrated, the two languages fragment into types of Spanish and English, and what the Chicano speaks is the product of many fragments. (29)

This text does not contain a new revelation, because many studies on this topic had already been done, prior to the appearance of Bruce-Novoa's essay. However, original or not, the theme of the Chicano's language is highly important, because it is one of the "characteristics" of the Chicano phenomenon. Despite this, it is not known with certainty how far this linguistic phenomenon, typically Chicano, can be exploited and to what extent it is a quasi-universal phenomenon. This comment is made in reference to the fact that this phenomenon occurs, *mutatis mutandis*, whenever there are contactual languages. Examples of this, without leaving the Americas, can be found in Paraguay, the Andean regions and the Province of Québec, among others. But we genuinely believe that this is also a Chicano phenomenon that can be profitably exploited by establishing Chicano "classifications," "categories," and "characteristics," prohibited by the essayist.

By the end of this section of the article, the attentive reader is logically compelled to question: What particular feature, in the final analysis, characterizes Chicano literature? In other words, in what does its originality consist? Truthfully, the critic sensed it. He puts himself in a predicament when he states:

What is originality? In the common connotations of the word, none; in the Octavio Paz sense, all. There is a particularity, even a new awareness, but as Paz has explained [?] (as

Unamuno before, not to mention countless others), originality is when we become the same as all the others in the process such as I have been describing [?]. (28)

The critic concludes his "theoretical" part with this paragraph. But, before bringing this section to an end, a few observations are necessary. By saying that "Chicano literary space is the same as all other artistic spaces, that it shares the same characteristics of continuity," the critic is converting the "Chicano" into "universal". The first question which must be asked is: why the title, then, of "The Space of Chicano Literature"? Why not simply say "The Space of Literature," as the general title indicates? On the other hand, as observed previously, the critic advises and recommends (almost prohibits) that "We must avoid classifications that would attempt to define the characteristics of Chicano Art," (28) and, in the following sentence, states the contrary: "Chicano literary space [shares] the same characteristics of continuity." (28) Again the question must be posed: what kind of "characteristics" are these if, on the one hand, one is prohibited from establishing them and, on the other, it is assumed that they do exist and are necessary? Two lines later, without a sense of direction, one is confronted with the critic's central question (logical?), "What is originality?" One continues to read to find an adequate answer to the long interrogative that was posed from the very first page. "In/of what does Chicano literature's *originality* consist"? The answer: "In the common [?] connotation of the word, *none*; in the Octavio Paz sense [?] *all*". Truly, it is incomprehensible.

He continues citing names such as Octavio Paz, Unamuno and "countless others" without transcribing or analyzing the text. Instead, he summarizes by stating: "Originality is when we become the same as all the others in a process such as I have been describing." And, naturally, one must ask the question: what is it, and in/of what does it consist to "become the same as the others." There is no explication as to who the others are, nor a description of them given in order to know and to be able to establish a relationship of equality or sameness? In addition, if *originality* consists in "a process such as I have been describing," then, we lose control of our nerves and are forced to ask, what process and... where was it described?

At the end of the "theoretical" part of Bruce-Novoa's essay, there are two things remaining to be done: 1) to ascertain if that "theory" is indeed *applicable* to the examples or literary texts that Bruce-Novoa chose in order to be able to test the application of the supposed theory and 2) a summary of the principles and a general evaluation of Bruce-Novoa's theory. The first point will be analyzed next, leaving the second point for the fifth chapter.

IV

Textual Application

One is reminded by Juan Bruce-Novoa in his article "The Space Chicano Literature" that "The test of a theory is in its application" (29). And indeed there is no other way, since the purpose of any theory, after its elaboration, is to be able to apply it to something. In fact, this something (Chicano literature in this case) is where the idea burgeons so that the theoretician can give it a sense of logic, in other words, this "something" is what becomes the object of study.

As all theoreticians, Bruce-Novoa begins constructing the parameters of that conceptual structure in the manner of a referential framework. After this is accomplished, it is necessary to place the disperse elements of the literary texts in the intellectual edifice. Naturally, when an scholar reaches a level that gives him the ability to conceive of an ideological and conceptual system that supposedly organizes and gives a sense of "continuity" to a complex, disparate and "discontinuous" object, this requires a great deal of training, meditation and intellectual power of synthesis.

In order for the theory to be sound and applicable, not only does it have to be founded on the object that irradiates those same elements, but the focal point or framework has to be organized and, moreover, —this is the most important aspect— the pieces of the scaffolding must correspond with the elements that emanate from the object of study. If any one of these three elements is absent, the theory has not been thoughtfully constructed, and, instead, is nothing more than an ideal and fictitious chimera.

Indeed, as the critic says, "The test of a theory is in its application." A detailed analysis of the principles on which Bruce-Novoa's theory is founded was attempted in the previous divisions. These principles revealed some flaws and errors. It is time to ascertain if these principles, once applied, will prevail vis-à-vis the *application*. The first introductory paragraph will be cited. The test of a theory is in its application. I have chosen a few pieces in which *man's struggle with chaos* and *the resolution of the conflict* by turning to literary space are evident. It is not my intent to study these works in depth here, but only to indicate rapidly how the pattern of *chaotic discontinuity-image retrieving-union-continuous literary space* is found in some representative Chicano works. (Emphasis ours). (29)

Some terms were emphasized in the text because they summarize the essence of what the critic explained previously in the theoretical section and, at the same time, they synthesize the fundamental concepts of the theory that he attempts to put into practice. It is evident that these terms will be predicated of/and applied to the eight texts to be analyzed.

The three fundamental theoretical elements are: 1) "man's struggle with chaos," 2) "resolution of the [chaotic] conflict," and 3) the manner in which this resolution is accomplished, thanks to the "literary space."

The expression "man's struggle with chaos" seems very vague. To whom is the critic referring when he alludes to "man"? To the artist who "retrieves" another man from death/continuity? Is he referring to the (discontinuous) reader (observer/listener) who, upon reading the literary piece, retrieves something lost in reality and found in the "continuity of space," that is to say, from art, so that, by the act of reading, the work will not be relegated to (chaotic?) oblivion? Or is it simply the abstract concept of "Man"? The critic seems to indicate that he is referring to an historical context in which the pre-literary Chicano "man" lived, precisely for that reason, in chaos and, by means of the literary act, the conflict was "resolved" by taking form on paper, this latter being one of Bruce-Novoa's many "spaces."

Later, in the same paragraph, he synthesizes the literary theory and/or the literary creative process, in accordance with the following pattern: "chaotic discontinuity-retrieval of the image-union-continuous literary space." This formula seems acceptable within the parameters of the theory of literary space. It is noted, however, that the element or term "union" now appears for the first time in the article, *after* having presented his theory, and, therefore, one does not know exactly to what he is referring.

The first example that he cites to "test [his] theory of space" is the well-known poem by José Montoya, called "El Louie." He synthesizes it very well.

Louie is dead. Time has devoured Louie's image, but death, like literature, is atemporal and all of Louie's life is now simultaneously fixed outside of discontinuity. However, death is an invisible continuity, and so the artist must retrieve the disappeared images from time and give them a space within which they can become visible. That space is the poem. (29)

Sustaining himself on what he had developed in the theoretical part, one is told that "death, like literature, is atemporal and all of Louie's life [chaos] is simultaneously fixed [in the poem] outside of discontinuity," in other words, life. Louie's life and image will be lost in oblivion with death unless an artist, such as José Montoya, "retrieves" it from that oblivion, from "invisible continuity" or death. To accomplish this, the artist (discontinuous being?) will be the instrument, the "medium," a small god that, by way of the artistic "ritual," will retrieve from death ("invisible continuity") the *image* of the deceased Louie. He will snatch the image from *time*, "devourer of images," and give it "a space within which they [the images] will become visible". This method seems appropriate on the surface (surface structure?), but penetrating deeper, the question emerges, why is it now only "time" the devourer of Louie's (discontinuous) life/(continuous) image? And, why can those images be fixed only in "space"? Prosaically speaking, one knows that even a book "cover" or a page is a "space," as the critic stated at the beginning of his study. But the fact remains that with death ("invisible continuity") Louie's image ("continuity") disappeared not only from "time," but also from "space." It would be logical

to think that, after having retrieved Louie's image from death, the artist would cast it in literary space and time, because the latter is also "continuous" (atemporal?). Do not forget that time and space are two inseparable concepts-realities because they require and need each other mutually. Once again, it is worth citing the philosopher Eli de Gortari in his *Introducción a la lógica dialéctica / Introduction to Dialectical Logic*.

Space and time have thus lost [according to the theory of relativity] their absolute character of separate and independent forms of existence. But the discovery of this relativity of spatial interval and of temporal simultaneity does not signify the refutation of the objectivity of space-time, instead it puts in manifestation the relative character of movement. The metaphysical separation between space and time, therefore, has been destroyed, in order to conceive of these as absolute and objective, but not in their mutual separateness, but rather in their reciprocal relationship. (Translation ours). (120)

Bruce-Novoa's text reads:

That space is the poem which presents the image to us, the images of a specific man, Louie, while it consciously transforms him into a prototype of a group. (29)

Here, too, it is noticed that, although the text flows normally, it lacks precision. That the poem is "the space" in which the images of Louie, a specific man, takes shape, appears to be correct, but that the artist transforms them "into a prototype of the group" (the Pachucos) is not convincing, for the simple reason that Louie was precisely, *before* death, a member of a group called the Pachucos, and, therefore, the artist did not transform him from Louie, "a specific man [...] into a prototype of the group," instead he removed him from the individual life reality and cast him as he was in social reality: "prototype [member/type?] of a group." Is it Louie the individual or Louie a member of a group called the pachuco that which the artist retrieves and transforms?

We believe that the expression "the poem has opened a space for his life, and death, and thus be able to be represented continuously" (29) lacks accuracy. We say this for two reasons: first, because, if indeed it is true that those images —thanks to the conception and action of the artist— took form on some sheets of paper ("space"?), there is no guarantee that they will be represented (read) "continuously." And, secondly, because it is easily assumed that art is "continuous" ("space") and not contaminated by "discontinuity." But, as indicated previously, any philosopher or scientist can demonstrate that time and space are two concepts and two "continuous" complementary realities, and, at the same time, "discontinuous." On the contrary, it is a given that there are pieces of art that "disappeared," or have been relegated to chaotic "discontinuity," or to "invisible continuity," in other words, met their demise.

A general question that can be asked, because it had been disturbing from the outset —and will be asked again at the end of the study— is simply the following: is the poem "El Louie" a "literary space" or not? According to Bruce-Novoa's theory, the poem undoubtedly is a "space," because the critic proved it in his own way. But, what about the "literary" aspect? In what does it consist? In "retrieving the images" from the chaotic discontinuity of reality? A history book

about the pachucos (or a particular pachuco) likewise "retrieves" the image, but this does not prove that it is "literature." We will be reminded that, here, within this theory, the intention is to emphasize only the element of (literary) "space" while assuming that everyone knows the meaning of "literary." It can also be *assumed* that everyone knows the meaning of "space," but, nevertheless, numerous pages were dedicated to this aspect in an effort *to prove* it.

In the quotation below, the reader is confronted with another new term, which had not been analyzed in the body of the theory: that of "universality."

Louie is retrieved from the initial disappearance and he becomes the image of the pachuco, a particular Chicano type with which all of us can identify to some degree, and a Chicano particularity with which all men can identify to some degree, and on up the universalizing ladder. (29)

The question arises, what has this to do with "literary space?" It has been noted repeatedly that in order for literature to be "literature," that is to say, acceptable as literature, it has to possess the characteristic of *universality*. However, even if this assumption were to be correct, it would be difficult to adapt this characteristic within the context of the critic's theory, unless one considers the *process* of "universalization" as being something similar to "a space that should expand and grow" (41, note 5). The results would be two very different types of "spaces": an objective (=quantity of works or *corpus*) and a subjective (=quality of abstraction on the part of the reader or readers). The term "universality" was not part of the theory, that is to say, it appears now for the first time, much as "originality" and "union," which were alluded to previously. Another difference will be evident in the next example.

The second literary text, which he utilizes to substantiate the theory, is the poem "A Trip Through the Mind Jail," by Raúl Salinas. The critic's synthesizing analysis is, though limited, well defined, in accordance with his theory. However, it must be stated that, here too, another new term, not seen previously, makes an appearance: "order."

The center of the universe, home, has disappeared, which means that order also is gone, resulting in the threat of chaos only alluded to here, but made more explicit further on. (29)

It is believed that the questioning here of the concept of "order" is extremely important, not only in and of itself, but because, as occurs with other terms, it lends itself to equivocations, vagueness and transpositions, debilitating in this manner the ideological, conceptual and structuring content of the theory. The text of the poem, to which the critic is referring, is "La Loma/Neighborhood of my myth/demolished, erased forever from/the universe." (29) Bruce-Novoa interprets it by saying that "the center of the universe, home, has disappeared, which means that order also is gone." (29)

The critic's interpretation does not correspond exactly with the text, not even with his own theory, since the meaning of the text is that the barrio "La Loma" (not his "house/home") has

disappeared from the "universe", that is to say—in the figurative sense—from the "face of the earth." That the "house/home" (= discontinuous reality) is the "center of the universe" is very much a *sui generis* interpretation. But, in the same line, the critic states that, once his "home" (= barrio) had disappeared, the "order" likewise disappeared. Again there is a question, to what order is he referring? Where does this term fit within his literary theory? Is it equivalent to the concept of "continuity" of which the critic spoke so frequently?

As if this were not sufficient, ten sentences later he employs the same word, but apparently with a different meaning.

The poem's voice begins its trip through the barrio, establishing two types of interior orders. One is made of the places like Zaragoza Park, Guadalupe Church and others, all particular, nameable objects, sign posts of the space of the poem. The second is a temporal tracing of the life of the narrator's peer group with its markers of specific experiences. The second is played out on the background of the first, and together they represent the lost barrio and life images. (29-30)

In the first place, upon revealing that the poetic voice begins by "establishing two types of *interior orders*," frankly the statement is incomprehensible. He endeavors to explain it by stating that one consists of "particular places," such as Zaragoza Park and Guadalupe Church, and the other of the "temporal tracing" of the lives of the friends and acquaintances of the narrator.

In the second place, and although understood clearly as to what the critic is attempting to state, it is not comprehensible why he now employs the terms "order" and "orders," "interior orders" and "temporal tracing" without first having provided a critical Chicano "space" for them in the theory. It appears that the first "order" is in opposition to the particular "chaos" of the narrator's disappeared "home" (= barrio). But, on the other hand, the poetic text contrasts the disappeared barrio ("La Loma") to the "universe." The critic should keep this in mind. It appears, however, that he is insinuating that the "chaos" found within the "home" (barrio) is a *dis*-order, that is to say, a disappeared "order." Would it not have been better to employ the former term of "discontinuity," or absence of "continuity"?

When he speaks of "two types of interior orders," referring to particular places and specific persons of the barrio, why not say two "spaces," one "spatial" and the other "temporal"? Or, why not simply designate "two levels," one physical—park / church—and the other human—friends / acquaintances?— Why "interior" orders and not "exterior," or simply, "orders," without specifying interior nor exterior? Keep in mind that the term "order" is now employed as an antipode to the former term "chaos" of *dis*-order, not to levels.

Next, and to prove the fundamental focus of his "theory," the critic cites the following passage from the same long poem "A Trip through the Mind Jail":

I needed you *then...identity...a sense of belonging*.
I need you *now*.

so essential to adult days of imprisonment.
 you keep me away from INSANITY'S hungry jaws;
 Smiling/Laughing/Crying. (Emphasis ours). (30)

The meaning of the stanza is clear: the living memory of his barrio was necessary *before* ("then"), when he was a child, in order to possess the "feeling of belonging" and of "identity," and also *now*, as an imprisoned adult, he continues to need it in order to avoid falling into the "jaws of insanity" ("chaos"?"order"?).

The critic, partially applying his theory, expresses it in the following manner:

The chaos of insanity is opposed to the order and meaning given him by the barrio.
 Destroyed by contingent reality, the barrio exists now in the literary space opened for it
 by the poem, and only in the poem. (30)

Some points of interest, at times conflictive, must be examined. The first sentence of the quotation states: "The Chaos of insanity is opposed to the order and meaning given him by the barrio." Keep in mind that the poetic voice speaks of "identity" and of "belonging" to the barrio *before* the poem took form on paper or "literary space." In other words, in order to avoid insanity he had to recur to *memory*, not to reading on a piece of paper (literary space) of the (chaotic?) existential and vital "continuity" of his barrio. This is underscored because the critic says in the following sentence that "the barrio [...] exists now [...] *only* in the poem [paper]."

We must ask if there are not two fundamental contradictions here. In the first place, by claiming that "the chaos of insanity is opposed to the order and meaning given him by the barrio," if (normal, everyday) reality is "discontinuous" (= chaotic), as Bruce-Novoa expresses it repeatedly in the theoretical introduction, would not insanity be precisely —such as childhood, death, eroticism, mysticism, religion— a rupture from the "discontinuity" of that same discontinuous reality? In other words, is it not possible that "insanity" is, although paradoxically, a manner of submerging into "continuity"? Secondly, how is it possible that the "barrio" (La Loma) is, in a given moment, a "discontinuous reality," as he indicated several times in the theoretical introduction, and now, in the application, he claims that that same "discontinuous" reality, by nature, "gives order and meaning," that is to say, confers essential "continuity" and is opposed to the discontinuity of "chaotic insanity" in order to prevent it?

The critic completes his analysis in a manner similar to that of "El Louie":

The generalization of the particular images of La Loma is achieved through the
 enumeration of other barrios from across the Southwest. The process is complete. (30)

This passage is deeply disturbing, because, according to the critic, "the generalization of the particular images" is equated with "universalization," and this is done in a very heterodox manner. In other words, "the generalization of the particular images" (La Loma) cannot be achieved by means of the "enumeration" (quantification) of other barrios. The "generalization" is

a *quality*, not a quantitative "enumeration." Is it possible to conceive that the *process* of universalization ("generalization") resides in the number or total *sum* of the particulars? The accumulation of numbers —itself discontinuous— can never become the *essence* of the quality —continuous. Even assuming that what was read in Bruce-Novoa's text were true, in this example ("A Trip") the concept of universalization is very distinct from that of "El Louie." In "El Louie" there is, in addition to a qualitative process, a case of vertical process, denoting depth and synthesis. In "A Trip" one is witness to, in addition to a quantitative process, a case of horizontal process, meaning superficial and enumerative.

It would be tedious to examine Bruce-Novoa's application of the theory to each of the eight literary texts selected by him. Thus, after the first two, which were poems, this chapter will conclude with an example in prose: ... *y no se lo tragó la tierra*, a novel by Tomás Rivera. To begin, it is necessary to call attention to two expressions in the introductory paragraph:

... *y no se lo tragó la tierra* brings us back to the positive images [...]. The apparently loose structure [of the novel] reflects the chaos in which the protagonist finds himself at the beginning. (33)

If indeed the first passage, not analyzed here, which refers to the short story "A Rosary for Doña Marina", by Octavio Romano, is characterized as "negative," the negativism in *Tierra* becomes more pronounced, and, not as the critic claims, that *Tierra* "brings us back to the positive images." Actually, there is nothing positive to be found in this novel. As for the second part of the quotation, that is to say, that "the apparently loose structure reflects the [psychological / rational] chaos in which the protagonist finds himself," is hardly just, because another of the texts which the critic analyzes, the novel *Bless Me, Ultima* by Rudolfo Anaya, despite having a well interworked chronological structure, its underlying "chaos" is very similar to the one in *Tierra*. In other words, what the critic is claiming regarding this novel appears to be more of a coincidence between theme and structure, between content and form, than a relationship of cause-effect.

The critic begins his analysis of *Tierra* by utilizing, as would be expected, some part of his theory of the literary space.

A clearer picture of chaos would be harder to find. The protagonist has lost the words, he is confused in the time sequence and he is rationally disoriented. Yet in a way he is fortunate, because the chaos of his apparent insanity will lead him to the discovery of literary space [the novel itself]. (34)

It is agreed that "a clearer picture of chaos would be harder to find" in Chicano literature, for the simple reason that the boy narrator "has lost the *words*, he is confused in the sequence of time and is rationally *disoriented*." Up to this point, there is partial agreement with the critic. The word "partial" is used because we are not convinced that this first chapter of the novel can be characterized as verisimilar, as has been explained on another occasion (Alarcón, "El autor como narrador"). But this has nothing to do directly with the theory and analysis of the critic.

As for the second part of the quotation, there is no agreement. It seems somewhat simplistic that "in a way he [the protagonist] is fortunate, because the chaos of his apparent insanity will lead him to the discovery of literary space [the novel itself]." One immediately asks, how is it that this state of semi-insanity, of disorientation and loss of words—including his own name— could lead him to clearly see the complex surrounding reality that envelops him and that, shortly afterwards, would be able to describe it to the reader? This appears to be a great improbability.

But even supposing that this were possible, a greater improbability yet is that the protagonist / narrator would be so bold as to write a novel and, suddenly, begin the second chapter of the narration without a trace of "apparent insanity" or "chaos" in his psychology and faculty of reasoning.

In this same paragraph, the critic is leading us to a dangerous and questionable observation: that the young protagonist will discover "the literary space [the novel itself]." This is another gigantic leap for which the critic had not prepared us previously in his theory of Chicano literary space. Later he will return to this point, and so will we.

The critic continues telling us that the two principle markers or preoccupations which permeate the novel are "fear" and "oppression." That is true. And also that these two fundamental factors lead him to the negation and "rejection of the [two] fundamental figures of Christianity" (34), namely the existence of the devil and God. Although the boy believes he has personally liberated himself from these two "absolute" beings, he is patently aware that "death" and "oppression" still exist. There is agreement with the critic up to this point. But, for the second time, he insinuates the previous affirmation: that "he [the fictitious boy protagonist] will learn a greater lesson [than the one of fear and oppression]: *the process of art*" (34). He bases this observation on a passage at the end of the novel ("Under the House"). It reads: "...he realized he had not lost anything. He had discovered something. To discover and rediscover and *synthesize* [...]" (128). Depending on the novelistic text, the critic arrives at the following analysis and conclusions:

He has learned that the images do not have to be lost, that they can be retrieved and given a space where they can be related and joined in some order. At the point of discovery, that place is the imagination, but they will fade if left there. Everyday life will devour them [...]. He must fix them in art. (35)

There is agreement with the critic in the application of a given concept of his theory to the text, such as, for example, that the images of everyday life "can be retrieved and given [literary] space" so that they will not "fade" if left to the mercy of mere memory. But there is no agreement with the logical sequence that he presents to us. That the boy protagonist (fictitious entity created by the author Tomás Rivera) is aware that "the images do not have to fade" in oblivion, is possible. That these images can be "retrieved," is perhaps true in some measure. But that the protagonist can "give them a [literary] space," is not possible, because the term "space" taken by the critic from his theoretical scaffolding is not and cannot even be remotely present in the mind of the boy narrator. The assertion that "he [the boy narrator] has to [is obligated to] fix them [the

images] in art [by writing a novel]", is a logical aberration. Further examination will follow. That Unamuno's pirandellian idea of confronting himself (the author) with the (fictitious) character Augusto Pérez in the novel *Niebla*, can happen, difficult as it may be to accept. For the simple reason that the *author* of flesh and blood, Unamuno, creator of the fictitious character, can easily destroy him. If he created him on a whim, likewise he can freely destroy him. That Tomás Rivera could have done something similar with his protagonist, is likewise acceptable. But that the fictitious entity (the boy narrator of *Tierra*), created by Tomás Rivera, is revealed, in the last chapter of the novel, "Under the House," *transforming himself into an entity of flesh and blood who decides to write his own novel*, appears to be an assault on logic and, consequently, on any literary theory. In other words, it is an improbability.

As if this were not sufficient, the theoretician-critic further explains—referring to the passage in which the boy comes out from under the house and climbs a tree near the house, greeting the Other (twice an entity of fiction)— "the projection of his own image within the Other's in the last scene *proves* that *he* [the boy narrator] *has learned the lesson* [of writer/artist]." Soon afterward, he adds: "he [the narrator] is *practicing* the craft of the *artist* [writer]." Water could not be clearer.

The entire passage could be seen as a hoax or could be considered somewhat delirious. This frequently occurs with the critics, because this medium of work deals precisely with fiction and, sometimes, fictitious criticism is invented. In other words, it is contagious. In contrast, the present divergent case cannot be explained in this manner, because, in the following sentence, one reads:

I am not playing naive games of believing in the `Reality' of the character, but rather the serious game of believing in the reality of the book. (35)

This conscious clarification on the part of the critic neither explains, nor clarifies, nor excuses the previous affirmation: "I am not playing *naive* games of believing in the `Reality' of the character, but rather the serious game of believing in the reality of the book [novel]." In addition to the subtle distinction (vagueness?) which this implies, it does not clarify the situation. This arbitrary explanation is a reminder of the Latin adage which claims: *excusatio non petita, accusatio manifesta*.

Consequently, this cannot be explained unless there is an affirmation that the critic is equating author = narrator or, better yet, narrator = author. The only thing the boy protagonist and narrator of "Debajo de la casa/Under the House" (in which he "retrieved" the lost year and "synthesized" the images) needed was a pen and a notebook in order to describe the images of that "lost year," in other words, to transform himself into the adult author, Tomás Rivera.

Perhaps the most noticeable flaw is the one indicated at the end of our analysis, i.e., that the central character (protagonist-narrator) transforms himself into *author*. The character is the product of a creation, and thus, cannot become in that instant his own creator. Using the theoretician's own terminology, because the protagonist is an entity of fiction, i.e., unreal

("continuous"), he can no longer go beyond his natural limits to become a ("discontinuous") real entity of flesh and blood. This would constitute an anticlimax to his own ("discontinuous?") theory.

V

Principle Concepts

The principle and outstanding concepts which served as a foundation for Bruce-Novoa's literary "theory" of "The Space of Chicano Literature" have been observed in the first part, and now also in this section. Among the conspicuous concepts are those of space (in addition to time), of continuity and discontinuity, of universality and particularity, of the impersonal and the personal, of order and chaos and of Being and nothing[ness].

Because the concept of "space" appears in the general title and also in the subtitle (and throughout the entire essay) it should be the most outstanding and important of the concepts mentioned. However, it appears that, because of its variability and lack of precision, it is flawed and, consequently, cannot serve as a base and foundation upon which his "theory" can be erected. On the contrary, the concepts of "continuity" and "discontinuity," given that more pages are dedicated to them, more attention given to them, and are better profiled, should be viewed as the two props on which the "theory of Chicano literary space" would have to be built. The opportunity was present, in fact, the critic attempted to conjugate them with the concept of "space," but it seems—as has been demonstrated already—he did not succeed.

The concepts of "universality" and "particularity," too frequently utilized in present day criticism, did not have the effect or impact that was expected. In fact, there were several contradictions and the result was that, instead of explaining "Chicano literary space" within these two coordinates, it was more confusing than expected.

The concepts of the "personal" and the "impersonal" not only remained undemonstrated, but in addition were never defined, as was the case with the major part of the concepts employed in the lengthy essay. Bruce-Novoa could have profitably exploited these two concepts by interlinking and intercrossing them with those of particularity and universality, with those of continuity and discontinuity, respectively. In fact, he tried, but did not accomplish it.

Relying on the six divisions, blocks or "spaces" described in the theoretical part of his essay, the critic tried to connect and coordinate them supporting himself, above all, on the concepts of continuity and discontinuity. These elements were: religion, childhood, death, eroticism, mysticism, and art. The general observation, previously described in a fragmented manner, is the following: two complementary concepts (antithetical in the critic's opinion) as is the case with "continuity" and "discontinuity," when applied to six "spatial" (?) themes or elements as disparate as those enumerated above, cannot avoid having serious flaws. For example, childhood and death, though they could have some common elements and of contact, are two "realities," if not antithetical, at least disparate. The same can be said of eroticism and mysticism, because each

has a distinct nature—even though the case of Saint John of the Cross is brought to bear as an example by the critic (25)—they cannot be equated. Finally, art cannot be equated with death (in spite of the fact that the critic attempts to convince the contrary, as with the example of "El Louie").

Penetrating deeper into the subject matter, the following is an attempt at a brief summary. Childhood is a non-permanent beginning of a process, while death is a permanent and irreducible end of that process. Eroticism, although not always, is a "moment" of plenitude of a biological nature with "the other" which results, in the majority of the cases, not in plenitude, but in a "personal" void that does not leave any kind of an imprint whatsoever. Mysticism, being of a spiritual nature, consists in a long and difficult apprenticeship that leads to an intimate state, although only of limited perpetuity, with "the other." Art, as with the previous cases, can be ambivalent: considered in and of itself—in reality and not in the abstract—can be semi-permanent (a novel, a poem) or it can become a fleeting and momentaneous experience, or a pleasant or unpleasant one, on the part of the reader/observer. The fact that a painting can be in a museum, or a book in a library, for many years, is not a guarantee of continuity nor of permanence. Its objective and permanent "existence" depends on the (e)valuator subject (=transient and "chaotic") and on the repetition of the act of observation or the act of reading, according to the critic. Consequently, these acts, within the context of Bruce-Novoa's theory, are, therefore, "discontinuous." In his theory, then, art cannot be continuous. In the world of the abstract, art has the permanence and continuity common to any idea, concept or metaphysical reality--not necessarily artistic. Nothing more, nothing less.

If one enters into the complicated pathways of philosophy, which, after all, is the catalyzing intellectual activity of human knowledge, all of the concepts that the critic employs to construct his theory can be de-constructed and, therefore, his theoretical edifice can likewise collapse. The critic seems to indicate that "continuity" is something positive for art, as it is for the other five elements or "spaces" enumerated previously. In fact, according to Bruce-Novoa, this continuity is the foundation of art, because it gives it characteristics of permanence. But the concept of continuity is merely that: a concept. According to our critic, reality (not the concept) is, by nature, "discontinuous." Indeed, neither in reality nor in the order of concepts can it be demonstrated that "continuity" is continuous, because, the very fact that it is continuous, dialectically implies discontinuity. And, vice versa, an absolutely discontinuous "discontinuity" cannot be conceived either in reality or in the abstract. In other words, they are two completely, dialectically and mutually intergrating concepts and realities. The philosopher Eli de Gortari (*Introducción a la lógica dialéctica/Introduction to Dialectical Logic*) briefly summarizes the concept.

Continuity and discontinuity are, therefore, distinguishable moments, but not distinct, from the inseparable unity of the all. Continuity is the course of the continuous changes of the discontinuous moments interlocked in tight unity with the whole. (Translation ours). (59)

As can be observed, Bruce-Novoa's entire supposed theoretical structure can easily plummet to

the ground, if we ponder these two capital concepts or categories of "continuity" and "discontinuity" within his "theory of space."

Speaking of spaces, analysis of the fallacy of the critic's literary "space" will follow. Between the "space" which the hyphen (-) occupies, which separates Mexican from American, in Mexican [-] American, and the "space" of continuity—difficult to imagine, and, therefore, conceptually non-existent— anything or any concept can fall under the rubric of Bruce-Novoa's "space." Eli de Gortari is cited once again in order to see more fully how and with what clarity he expresses himself in such an intricate philosophical matter. The citation also underscores how the philosopher *interlinks* the concepts of space, time, movement, necessity and contingency, concepts which Bruce-Novoa scatters "discontinuously" here and there.

The elemental form in which the existent concatenation between each process in the universe and all of the others is expressed, is the *spatial relation*. *Space* constitutes, thus, the property common to all processes. (118)

The primordial forms of all particular existence is space and time; and any existence conceived *outside of space* is as absurd as would be an existence conceived *outside of time*. (119)

The theory of relativity has substituted the concept of the interval-of-space, or distance, independently of the concept of the *interval-of-time* between any two events whatsoever, for the more comprehensive concept of the *continuous-interval-of-space-time*. Space and time have thus lost the absolute character of separate and independent forms of *existence*. (120)

These properties of the universe determine the corresponding properties of *continuity* and *discontinuity* of space and of time, such as they show themselves directly in *movement*. (Translation and emphasis ours). (120-121)

It would have been much more valuable for the critic to have departed from a half dozen noted philosophers rather than to have founded himself on the thinkers he selected, who appear to be more poets than any other thing, with the exception of García Ponce. In no way diminishing their worth as thinkers, it is to be noted that literary criticism and theory are areas of gnoseological knowledge which require exactitude and precision in the labor of analysis, not metaphors and descriptive images.

It has been demonstrated that "the theory of Chicano literary space," as conceived and explicated by the critic, leaves much to be desired and lacks the firm foundation on which to establish his theoretical scaffolding. As seen previously, when attempting the application of the theory in textual practice, this critical theory—assuming that it is such a thing— of Chicano literary "space," could well be applied to any other literature that is not Chicano. In fact, it could be applied to carpentry, silversmithing, or any other occupation or human activity not artistic. And the persistent question remains: in/of what does the originality of this theory consist which

would make it capable of demonstrating the peculiarity of Chicano literature?

An aprioristic observation must be made: after having applied his own theory to eight Chicano literary texts himself, Bruce-Novoa has not been able to glean any more than any other critic applying *his* own critical approach to any other non-Chicano literary text.

VI

Conclusion

Conclusive remarks will disclose a few ideas regarding Bruce-Novoa's theory and its application to the literary texts. In general, it can be said that Juan Bruce-Novoa has made a considerable effort in the development of the theory as well as in the application to the literary texts. He succeeded to a certain degree. However, there are several grave flaws, and these are those emphasized throughout this analysis.

It would have been useful, on one hand, if Bruce-Novoa had more fully defined and developed the elements or terms employed in the theoretical section. On the other hand, if some of these theoretical terms, which he utilized later in the application, such as the concepts of "order," "union," "originality," and "universality" should have been developed and incorporated in the first part of the essay, where the theory was presented.

Another aspect of Bruce-Novoa's theory is its apparent lack of originality. Firstly, the term "space," taken in one of the meanings employed in the essay, is nothing more than a synonym of *place* or site in which some phenomenon is born and develops and is designated as proper, unique, one's own, which is nothing new. The same can be said, as already mentioned, of "historical space," of "philosophical space," of "mathematical space," etcetera. The concept in itself is relatively ancient.

The key terms on which he constructs and explicates his theory of Chicano literary space, are vague, arbitrary, questionable and, at times, even contradictory. This is in reference to the words and concepts of "continuity" and "discontinuity," of "space" and "time," of "order" and "chaos," of "particularity" and "universality." Any theoretician who wants to develop a solid theory must begin by clearly and logically defining the terms to be utilized, study the diverse possibilities of semantic meaning throughout history and its different contexts, and then construct a solid, well-founded structure. Finally, the critic must clarify the position taken so as not to confuse the reader.

The terms most employed by the critic such as "space" in and of itself and "continuity" and "discontinuity" must be seen as a pair. Every reader has a concept of what "space," "continuity," and "discontinuity" are, but these concepts *vary* according to the semantic origin and context or frame of reference in which they are placed.

The term "space," can be defined in different ways, according to the context in which it is being discussed. For instance, there is physical "space," geographic "space," another distinct one is geometric "space," still another "space" is the mathematical, there is the very different

philosophical, metaphysical and ontological "space" and of an even more distinct nature, psychic "space." The question becomes, is there such a thing as *literary* "space"? The critic Bruce-Novoa seems to think this is the case, since he repeatedly affirms this without reservations. And we too are inclined to believe in its existence. The worst part is that he employs this term in very diverse, disparate and arbitrary ways and in very distinct contexts, sometimes without having established a clear and logical relationship between them and his own theory. These forms and contexts range from the purely typo-topographical—the empty space which replaces the hyphen (-) between Mexican [] American—to a nebulous space, such as the "space of liberation" or the "space of continuity."

Speaking about the "space of continuity," there is a question of what kind of "space" is this? What kind of "continuity" could this be? If the context of each of these terms is not explained, it would be difficult to know of what he is speaking. And, if this were not enough, if Bruce-Novoa's theory is based on these nebulous terms or concepts, the theory itself has to be inevitably, logically and irremediably nebulous.

Though the thought is not very admirable, we believe, *mutatis mutandis*, that even an inexperienced critic in theoretical matters, could have done the same analysis of the literary texts analyzed by Bruce-Novoa without the necessity of having employed such a nebulous terminology. It would not be difficult to prove this statement. It is sufficient to glance at the application of the theory and at the results which were obtained from it, as has been explicated.

Other observations of a general nature could easily be done. For example, the generating idea of the disparate concepts that integrate Bruce-Novoa's theory is, according to this study, that of configuring in the artistic literary work the "continuity" of the "discontinuous" reality of the Chicano people and their world, thereby, providing the former with a literary space of its own. It can all be reduced, then, to the following proposition that, stated in common language, could be expressed in the following manner: "in order to *retrieve* the Chicano experiences [after they have disappeared] from *oblivion*, it is necessary to shape them [esthetically] *on paper*". This does not appear to be an idea that is either original or extraordinary.

We also think that the naming or characterizing of a theory as "literary *space*," appears to be a trope that could easily be replaced by the expression, already consecrated in all academic settings, "literary *corpus*." And this leads to another consideration: the title of the critic's theoretical essay, "The Space of Chicano Literature." Dissecting the title somewhat, the following elements could be found. The term "space" has been discussed. It is a term that is vague, very arbitrary and difficult to manipulate, precisely because it is imprecise. As stated previously, the term *corpus*, although dry and of material or quantitative connotation, i.e., accumulation of existing works, could function very well, or perhaps better, as a substitute for "space."

The second term of the title, "Chicano," although sufficiently clear in itself, after having been molded within the theoretical context of Bruce-Novoa's concepts of "particularity," "universality," "originality" and "nothing[ness]," has lost its impact. If indeed "Chicano space"

and its literature, according to the critic, is that void or emptiness ("nothing") or hyphen that is situated *between* the adjectives of nationality Mexican () American, that, on the one hand, is "nothing," but that, on the other hand, is the land or "space of promise" in which the so-called Chicano literary miracle will take place--sounds as beautiful as the plastic images and poetic metaphors. Moreover, if this theory of "Chicano" literature were to be applied, for example, to French Canadian literature, the result would be the same.

The third term of the title, that of "literary," seemingly, is the most problematic. This is because, throughout the entire long essay, an effort to define this term, exceedingly risky or touchy in and of itself, has never been made, much less the description of it. We suppose that "literary" is equal to, and synonymous with "artistic" and/or "esthetic." What the critic has stated, basically is, that literature (= artistic form) is the instrument by which the Chicano's vital experiences are extracted and snatched or seized from the "discontinuity" of everyday life (= discontinuous) in order to mold them in a "space of continuity" and, thereby, giving them *permanent* form. But this is not acceptable because, then, all of Bruce-Novoa's theory could be applied *in the same manner* to any non-literary textbook of Chicano history (v.gr., *Occupied America*, by Rodolfo Acuña), and the outcome would be the same.

In the last section of the critic's extensive study, commenting on the "application" of the theory to the literary texts, Bruce-Novoa confesses that his theoretical introduction "[although necessary] can at times be [seem] ambiguous" (27). In fact, it is. It seems that these pages were an honest and serious effort on the part of the critic to formulate a succinct and fundamental key idea, but it is hidden and suffocated among so much pompous garb. He attempted to prove that literary art has the virtue, as all art does, to immobilize, freeze, perpetuate, or, in some way, *eternize* the images that, because of the nature of life itself and of the instability of all that surrounds us, are subject to the fluctuations of the laws of evolution, transmutation and change, thus running the danger of "fading" forever. In order to prove this, the critic endeavored to construct a scaffolding, seemingly complex, *departing* from the concept of the *perenniality* of art.

Installed already in this position of departure, the critic could have selected a dozen, more or less, synonymous terms which according to his explication, have a tight or close relationship. It would have to involve, then, an "illustrative" approach more than an affirmatory or confirmatory one. The fundamental terms to which we are referring are, in addition to the very familiar or recognizable "space" of the title, that of "continuity" and of "discontinuity." As already seen repeatedly, these terms were never defined nor is there an explanation of what they consisted. Instead of doing this, the critic employed a good number of pages *illustrating* it, employing and basing himself on a method that could be called "comparative." It could be illustrated in the following manner: If this involves proving the *perenniality* of art against the vicissitudes of the contingency of life and the surrounding reality, and because this *perenniality*—as an essential characteristic of art—is difficult to "prove," we will attempt then to parallelly "illustrate" this assumptive characteristic, comparing it with other permanent (and also assumptive) characteristics of other tasks, events, states, and facts which appear and are an integrative part of human life, such as childhood, eroticism, religion, mysticism, and death.

These are the terms, concepts, props, markers, blocks, phenomena, and "spaces" which the critic employs, and with which the phenomenon called "art" will be *parallelistically compared*. What must be done—and this basically is what Bruce-Novoa made an effort to do—to illustrate (not affirm nor con-firm) the phenomenon "art" by saying that these *other* mentioned phenomena *participate* parallelistically of "literary space" and, in one form or another, of the same essential characteristic that literary art possesses: that of permanence or perennality.

This "illustrative" method, at first sight, seemed to shed light on a problem in and of itself complex. But, finally, the same problem remains that existed at the beginning: we were not offered proof or demonstration that the fundamental characteristic—perennality—which was sought in Chicano literary art, exists. Having ramified or divided the argumentation process, comparing "art" to five other phenomena or "spaces" also vital, did not help matters much, because it could not be *proven* either that those phenomena (childhood, the erotic act, mysticism, religion, and death) are, by definition, artistic and, consequently, perennial.

Finally, the passage is not convincing in which Bruce-Novoa, speaking of the young protagonist of *Tierra*, tries to persuade the reader that he "[the protagonist] should cast in [literary] art" the images which he himself had or possessed, as an entity of fiction. Not only is this acceptable, according to Bruce-Novoa, but, inclusive, when in the last scene of the novel the protagonist sees the "Other" from a tree, the critic notes that the boy narrator, being (still) an entity of fiction—belonging, therefore, to the sphere or "space of continuity," produced and created by Tomás Rivera—, became independent of his author or creator, "learned the lesson [of writer-artist]" and transformed himself into an entity of flesh and blood ("discontinuous being"). Moreover, without having paper, nor pen, not even "words" (because he had forgotten them), "he is practicing the craft of the artist [writer]." In other words, the paternity of the novel *...y no se lo tragó la tierra*, in the final analysis, should be ascribed or adjudicated to the boy protagonist, and not to Tomás Rivera. Perhaps this conclusion to which Bruce-Novoa arrives, will serve him—or someone else—as a seed for a new and "original" literary theory that silently and secretly could be gestating at this moment.

To conclude this observation, it is agreed that, although Bruce-Novoa made a considerable effort, and it is certainly laudable, he was incapable of guaranteeing that this effort would crystallize into a solid and valid theory. Perhaps the label "interesting" is the most appropriate word to be used in describing his theory.

In short, in order for this theory to be a "theory," "literary" and "Chicano," the scholar Bruce-Novoa will have to make some fundamental readjustments.

POSTDATA

Having completed this study, a new book by Juan Bruce-Novoa, *RetroSpace* (1990), was obtained. It is not the intent to discuss the book itself, but to present some observations that are related to the work already done, especially in reference to the varying editings between the first publication and second (which in reality is the third reprinting) and some new terms that the critic has employed in the presentation of the "theory" of "Chicano literary space."

Variations on a theme

Juan Bruce-Novoa's recent book, *RetroSpace*, is a collection or anthology of fourteen articles, most of which were published previously. In the Preface of this volume the author relates that "the majority of the essays appear here with small editorial changes." (7) In the article "The Space of Chicano Literature," which served as a basis for this study, the critic notes that "[this article] perhaps is the one that had the most influence of the entire collection, I included here under an expanded version and [as such] not published before" (7). Later in the article he states that "that essay then [published in *The Chicano Literary World*, 1975, and also in *De Colores*, 1975] was expanded and updated for the Canto al Pueblo Conference, celebrated in Corpus Christi in 1978. This second version is presented here, because it includes more applications of my theory" (94) regarding "Chicano literary space."

Stated in the Preface is the fact that there are three other essays in the collection which had not been disclosed previously. One of them carries the title of "Chicano Literary Space: Cultural Criticism/Cultural Production." There will be reference to this essay in the succeeding pages. In reality, this new article (1978, 1990) is an elaboration of the old one (1975), and helps to explain (as well as to confuse) the earlier essay.

Before discussing the basic commentaries of the text, it is necessary to draw attention to a detail that, although small in appearance, can be of transcendental importance. The text that served as a foundation for our work does not appear to be cited by Bruce-Novoa —neither in the Preface to *RetroSpace*, nor in the Bibliography of the book, nor in the body of the two aforementioned articles. As noted in the introductory chapter to our book and in the Bibliography, all citations quoted were from the article "The Space of Chicano Literature," which appeared in *De Colores* (1975). The question becomes, how is it that Bruce-Novoa has never mentioned this edition? Could it be that he was unaware of it? Could he have forgotten? Or, could it be that he does not acknowledge it? The importance of drawing attention to this detail resides, perhaps, in the fact, acknowledged by Bruce-Novoa, when he says: "Many of these texts [essays of mine] are difficult to find in their original publications, because they were published in ephemeral journals" (7), seemingly *De Colores* could be found among them. The complete version that appeared in this journal (*De Colores*, 1975) is transcribed in *Appendix A*.

In the following pages an attempt has been made to examine the discrepancies found when comparing the two versions of the same article. Examining with the three epigraphs at the beginning of the essay, it is noted that the second one, by Octavio Paz, was replaced with another one by Herman Melville. Although the text is different, the central concept of both is the same: the function of the image in literature. The first and third, by García Ponce and by Medina López respectively, remained intact. However, what surprised us tremendously was the sole epigraph that begins the new essay entitled "Chicano Literary Space: Cultural Criticism/Cultural Production" (1990). It reads:

Invention [creation]...does not consist in creating out of the void [nothingness], but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself (Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or: The Modern Prometheus*, X).

What draws our attention immediately regarding this epigraph is the change of intellectual attitude that Bruce-Novoa makes in reference to the concept of "nothing[ness]" within the context of literary "creation." Reference is drawn in particular to the *definition* which he had given previously with respect to "nothing[ness]" (1975), which he continued to use later (1978), and which he still continues to use (1990). This line or trajectory persists during all these years, however, this intellectual attitude seems to have changed ultimately. This partial change only creates more confusion in the already nebulous theory of the "space of Chicano literature." Focusing only on the text comparing the epigraphs in "The Space of Chicano Literature" (1975) and "The Space of Chicano Literature Update: 1978" and the last reprinting (1990), it states:

Only from nothing are there infinite possibilities —all simultaneously possible. Only in nothing can you find everything. (María Medina López, no reference). (22)

Invention [creation]...does not consist in creating out of the void [nothingness], but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself (Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or: The Modern Prometheus*, X). (57)

Upon comparing these two epigraphs, the question arises, why this change of intellectual and discursive attitude, when in the first version so much emphasis and fervor was placed on the "nothing[ness]" of the Chicano and Chicano literature in general? From the very beginning of the long study, several pages were dedicated to the theme or subject of "nothing" (See the first chapter —*Introduction*— of this work). At that moment it had already been mentioned that "nothing[ness]" could not produce the Being and, conversely, because nothingness was unable to burgeon or emanate from the Being, the Chicano artist could not be identified as the creator, nor could Chicano literature itself proceed from nothing. Now, a new article is published for the first time —chapter 14 of *RetroSpace*, "Chicano Literary Space: Cultural Criticism/Cultural Production—" in which there is a notation, contradicting his own posture as described in chapter 9 —that "invention," that is to say literary "creation," cannot be produced in the "void" or from

"nothing," but "out of chaos."

It is also stated that, in order for the artist or inventor to be able to realize his work, the first condition is that he/she has to have at hand the "material," the "prime material" or materials with which to shape his/her art. The "substance" of art (the Being) cannot bring itself into being, nor realize itself, unless it is based on another substance or substances, whatever these may be. In other words, as previously explained in opposition to the critic, he *now* does a turnabout to confirm our opposition, citing Mary Shelley in the epigraph which heads his new article, and that has been transcribed above. In other words, what he should have said previously, in the first article (1975) —as he appears to indicate openly now— is that the artist, technically speaking, cannot be a "creator," but a "transformer" of substances, among which any manifestation of art can be found. This demonstrates a fundamental and inherent contradiction in the critic's theory.

As disclosed formerly, the new version of the old article, "The Space of Chicano Literature," had suffered some fundamental changes: that it "was expanded, updated...and includes more applications of the theory [to literary texts]" (94). What needs to be clarified here, in reference to the modifications, is that, if indeed it is true that this new version includes more "applications" of the aforementioned "theory" of literary space, the theoretician does not indicate that two or three pages *have been cut or deleted* from the explication and exposition of that same theory. It appears that Bruce-Novoa, in this new version of the article, did things backwards: if indeed, as noted previously, this theory was vague, weak, and lacked a solid foundation such as it had been explained, cutting these three pages from the exposition, results in practically being left without a theory. This supposed theory is reduced thus to three or four isolated quotations by some authors, accompanied by a brief commentary on the part of the critic, which contributes nothing new. In particular, the pages in which Bruce-Novoa, based on Bataille and on García Ponce, studies the analogy or analogies between the artistic experience of the reader/observer/spectator and the experiences that the same reader/observer would experience before a religious fact or phenomenon, or in the presence of death, or recalling his/her own childhood, or in experiencing eroticism or mysticism. According to the critic, these five experiences had one characteristic in common: the violation or liquidation of the particular "discontinuity" of the individual, transforming this experience —though momentaneous and fleeting— into a union with the Other (another being, the world and/or life).

As a curious note, in this new version of the article, in addition to omitting the detailed analysis or exposition of these experiences, he not only inverts the order of these experiences, but he *changes* the "religious" experience for the experience of "love" (in lower case letters). Is this attributable to a momentaneous distraction on the part of the critic? It is thought that this "amorous" experience would fall or should fall within the erotic experience, if indeed love is an integral part of the religious element or phenomenon, taking into account what has been analyzed by the critic himself, it would be more appropriately included under the "erotic" experience (and not in any way under the "mystic" experience). Whatever the case may be, the important element here resides, once again, in the variability, ambiguity, and vagueness of the bases upon which supposedly this theory of "Chicano literary space" should be founded.

Another change that was noted in the new version of the article—and its new companion, called "Chicano Literary Space: Cultural Criticism/Cultural Production"—is the arbitrariness of the use of the term "theory." Bruce-Novoa now indistinctly employs the term "theory" as a synonym of "concept." Any reader, moderately experienced in literary studies—or in any other study—can easily recognize that a "concept," in and by itself, can never become a "theory." The latter, in general terms, requires a systematic scaffolding of a plurality of concepts, or a group of systematized concepts. A "theory" of "literary space" cannot be the same as a concept of that same literary space. To prove what was already stated, only the phrases in which these terms are employed synonymously and arbitrarily shuffled will be cited. The following passages are taken from the 1975 article, which had been revised in 1990).

I introduce my *concept* of the space of Chicano literature as a response to chaos.... (93)

This second version is presented here because it includes more applications of the *theory* [to the literary texts].... (94)

I hope my *concept* of literary space continues to offer an alternative to *approaches* which would limit our literature.... (94)

Chicano literature is the source of my *concept*.... (Emphasis ours). (94)

The following quotations have been taken from the recently published article (1990).

From the start, the difficulty the essay presents for readers has led to reductionist interpretations which confuse a general *theory* of space.... (157)

At the same time I will attempt to clarify the chaos from whence it [the *theory*] came, and the elements I borrowed from it, to piece together my *concept*.... (158)

My *theory* as cultural production.... (160)

Although my *approach* has been associated by some with Formalism or even New Criticism.... (160)

My critical *orientation* is best described as *eclecticism*... (160).

Yet someone else was listening as well who considered my *concepts* to be such a threat that a full-scale attack was begun... (169).

Too much attention has been given my "The Space of Chicano Literature" as the basic statement of my *theories*.... (Emphasis ours). (174)

Multiple deductions and commentaries can be made from these quotations. A single focus will be given to the most obvious question: how is it possible that a "theory" can be a theory if the term

"theory" itself is not consistently designated as a theory? Worst yet, what kind of a theory—a group of systematically coherent concepts—would this be if it is at times "a concept," and other times an "orientation," etcetera. The expressions theory(ies), concept(s), approach, and orientation are manipulated indiscriminately. If the term "theory," which is a key word, is shuffled with similar terms, but not synonyms, what can be expected of that supposed theory? It would not be surprising if the readers of this article had a serious difficulty with it—as Bruce-Novoa claims. The author's quotation will be transcribed more extensively in order to clarify some confusion:

It [the article/the theory] plagues me in the sense that, over a decade later and after *numerous applications and reformulations of concepts* "The Space of Chicano Literature" continues to be the most read of my essays, in many instances the only one people know, often solely through fragments quoted out of context by other critics. From the start, the *difficulty* the essay presents has led to reductionist interpretation which confuses *a general theory* of the *space* with *my particular vision* of the paradigm which informs Chicano literature. (Emphasis ours). (175)

This passage in itself is very revealing. The critic begins by saying that, more than a decade after the first publication (1975) of his article "The Space of Chicano Literature," not only has it been the most read of all the essays which he has written, but that it follows or pursues him like a plague. And Bruce-Novoa explains himself stating that it is attributable to the fact that the critics in general have only read or quoted it from a secondary source, based on fragments taken from the general context of his essay. This could be true. However, upon affirming that this essay, by and in itself, "[presents] difficulty," does not clarify anything. The truth is that the "difficulty" that Bruce-Novoa attributes to his article does not reside precisely in a difficulty with the conceptual and structural scaffolding of "the theory of literary space" that he proposes, but in the inherent vagueness of *his* own "theory" or "concept," as was demonstrated in the previous chapters. To this must be added a confession made by Bruce-Novoa in the quotation transcribed above, in which he himself declares that, for more than a decade, these "theory[ies]" or "concepts" of literary space have suffered "many reformulations" (157). The immediate question emerges, why were those revisions necessary? The obvious response: because, from the beginning, the theory was not well-founded.

In view of this, it must be reiterated that the "difficulty," which, according to the author of the essay, is inherent to the structural and philosophical complexity of the essay, does not reside in the "difficulty" of the essay, but in the lack of clarity throughout the exposition of the theory on the part of the author. The confusion, on the part of the readers, resides precisely, in the confusion that exists among the terms selected to elaborate this theory; in the lack of clarity of the concepts shuffled around by the theoretician; and in the lack of a conceptual system to be followed, be it original or borrowed. Here another source of confusion is found: on one hand, as noted in its proper place, the concept of "literary space" is not original; on the other, the supposed theory of this space cannot be original either, for the simple reason that it cannot be found, in structured form, in any part of the article and, finally, based on the texts and authors cited, Bruce-Novoa was not capable of elaborating his supposed theory. When the critic states,

for example, that "once again I found phenomenology in García Ponce" (162), this communicates nothing to the reader, unless he himself exposes that method and how it is applied phenomenologically to the analysis of the Chicano literary texts chosen by him.

An analysis will be made of the above because it is of great methodological importance and because it appears, for the first time as a new and transcendental element in his theory of literary space. It involves the phenomenological method.

Phenomenology: a new ingredient in Bruce-Novoa's theory

In the first version of "The Space of Chicano Literature" (1975), Bruce-Novoa had not included in his theory at all—at least not explicitly—the phenomenological method; he had not even mentioned the term "literary phenomenon," despite the fact that now he claims that, around 1974, "I was already thinking in terms of phenomenological space" (164). In the last version of the same article (1978, 1990) he alludes for the first time, and only *once*, to phenomenology. Allusions to this contemporary school are found several times in the last essay "The Chicano Literary Space: Cultural Criticism/Cultural Production" (1990), which, as indicated previously, is a twin and complementary article of the one published in 1975. In this new article the term "phenomenology," and its derivatives, appears nine times. Attention is drawn to these passages, as formerly noted to the terms "theory" and "concepts," with their derivatives.

The space of literature is experienced as a *phenomenological* field in which texts exist intertextually.... (158)

One can focus on areas of any size, tracing borders *to block off* a space of action to be analyzed... (158).

[...] in no way can it [criticism] embrace everything in the *phenomenological* field.... (159)

But despite the claims of some critics to be strictly objective and all-inclusive, no criticism is possible without *bracketing* the space. (159)

In them [García Ponce's essay] once again I encountered *phenomenology*.... (162)

When I first started working in Chicano studies, much of our cultural space was being *bracketed out* by the ideologues.... (163)

I was already [1974] thinking in terms of *phenomenological* space with a much *wider bracketing*. (164)

Luckily, I finally came across Juan García Ponce's writings, which reaffirmed the *phenomenological* slant of my Jesuit undergraduate studies.... (169)

I came to understand that he [Joseph Sommers] did not understand the differences between formalist and *phenomenologist*.... (Emphasis ours). (170)

These phrases have been transcribed so that the reader may be aware of how he uses them and what little information Bruce-Novoa provides regarding the phenomenological method, which he claims to have learned in the writings of his "mentor" Juan García Ponce and that, since that time (1974), helped him in the formation of his intellectual activity—in the *phenomenological* sense.

It is now incumbent to consider three points: In the first place—in addition to these loose phrases, which our critic scatters *ad casum* in various places of his article—reference can be made to a more extensive passage, in which *analogously and metaphorically* Bruce Novoa presents what is, or should be, the phenomenological method to be followed. Having done this, and as a second point, a brief outline will be presented to disclose the meaning of the phenomenological method as expounded by its founder, Edmund Husserl. Lastly, an attempt will be made to compare the two versions of the method: Bruce-Novoa's and the outline offered—including two texts by Blanchot—to ascertain if there is consistency or not between both postures.

Bruce-Novoa's phenomenological posture.

Under the subtitle *Literary Space*, with which he begins his article "Chicano Literary Space: Cultural Criticism/Cultural Production," he describes analogously and metaphorically what, for him, the method signifies. It will be described in a periphrastic form, because the literal transcription of the passage would be too long. In a few words, his method of exposition can be summarized in two metaphors: one taken from physics and the other from astronomy. In the first analogy Bruce-Novoa exhorts the reader to "imagine" a three dimensional design or model—without referring to the kind of model—as it appears on a computer screen. This design has to be in "constant motion, never static" so that a given form can never be defined nor a "permanent perspective" be allowed.

Afterward he proceeds to illustrate the same idea by means of another analogy taken from astronomy. He speaks about how some stars have already died, although their light has not reached earth yet, while the light of others, recently born, still has not reached us. He concludes that, if one wants to observe the stellar firmament, one is obligated to "group," form "nuclei" of stars. These nuclei, however, much as the "sidereal spaces," are always in movement. Sometimes, the "space" itself in which these nuclei are found is characterized by movement. The critic's location, as that of the scientist with respect to that "space," will determine how much and what parts of this space can or should be observed. The obligation of the critic, then, is to "delimit" or "reduce" the area or literary space to be studied. To begin, this would entail a "topography of surface" type function or job. Later, another obligatory task would be the "topological," in other words, moving from the surface to the "deep structure" of the space in question.

If indeed the two analogies that he employed —the one from physics and the one from astronomy— implied a continuous movement, difficult to analyze, and precisely for that reason, it is incumbent upon the critic to "*freeze* that space in a given moment" or to try to "chart the movement of certain relationships over a set period of time" (159). The critic has to admit that his/her task, after all, will be incomplete. "In no way can it [the observable] embrace everything in the phenomenological field" to be studied, given that "the total simultaneity and the *dynamic* polyvalence" (159) exceed the limits or the limitations of the critical observer. The *epojé*, or "reduction," or "bracketing," then, becomes obligatory because of the space to be analyzed. What can be deduced from this posture is that the critic finds himself before a literary space--as any other space--that is "moveable and dynamic" and that, in order to be able to study it, the critic has to "freeze it," reducing it to portions or parts, because, any other way, it would be impossible for him to "embrace" all of the phenomonic or phenomenological space, given its inherent limitations in the analytic process. The critic's phenomenological method has been summarized with what has been stated thus far. Henceforth, the literary textual analysis begins.

The Chicano literary space, which he "puts within parenthesis," can be reduced to the following. After selecting the thematic paradigm, Bruce-Novoa informs the reader that the process of art, like that of the function of the critic, is triple: "The theme appears in the deep paradigm of Chicano literature: 1) the threat of chaotic discontinuity, 2) the recuperation of vital images, and 3) unity in continuous literary space" (99). Now, in terms of concrete application--and using as an example the first text that the critic chooses, the poem "El Louie," by José Montoya--the following conclusions may be made: 1) "threat" (the death of the pachuco Louie dispossesses the group of meaning and identity), 2) "recuperation" (the images of Louie's life are shown as vital images and as central to the group), and 3) "answer" (the poem affirms that Louie's life was extraordinary). Bruce-Novoa's phenomenological exposition and its application to one of the Chicano literary text, the poem "El Louie," can be reduced to this. As can be seen by his explanation, "his" Phenomenology is reduced to the simple mention of the word as such, but there was no theoretical development, achievement nor an application of any type —except for that of a topography, a topology or a cartography of "Chicano literary space."

Phenomenology: Husserlian "epojés." The first observation is the following: when a theoretician proposes a theory, it is not sufficient to say that "we propose a new and original theory" and, to prove this assertion, makes *references* only to certain terms that —is patent, obvious, and evident— the reader *should know* beforehand. Seemingly, it is not incumbent upon the theoretician to explain his theory, not even the definitory terms to be employed in his theory, so that the reader is aware first hand of what the theoretician is trying to accomplish. The implicit suggestion on the part of Bruce-Novoa seems to be that it is the reader's responsibility to conduct his own investigation of the sources on which the proponent bases himself to establish his theory. The reference, it is clear, is to *his* phenomenological method. The procedure cannot be the one described previously, but, very much to the contrary, the theorist has to explain, develop, expose before the eyes of the reader what the theory consists in/of. If this is not done, then one does not have a right to say "This is my theory. You take the responsibility of searching for its foundations and roots and, incredibly, the application."

The description above indicates what one must do throughout this long study: search for the roots of Bruce-Novoa's *supposed* theory of Chicano literary space. Now —when he states for the first time in his last article that his is a phenomenological method— it calls for further scrutiny, to undertake another search for the roots of this method. To accomplish this —it must be admitted without subtlety— it was necessary to read several books and articles on philosophy and on the phenomenological method. The interested reader who wants to further investigate the sources utilized in our exposition, is referred to the following works, which can be found in our Bibliography / Cited Works, such as *Husserl: su fenomenología / Husserl: His Phenomenology*, by José María García-Mauriño and Antonio Fernández Revuelta. *Doctrinas filosóficas / Philosophical Doctrines*, by Raúl Gutiérrez Saenz. *La realidad de la filosofía: la vida fenomenológica / The Reality of Philosophy: Phenomenological Life*, Volumes I & II, by José María Rubert y Candau.

The word "phenomenon" has been used since classical antiquity. However, the meaning has varied throughout the centuries. The explicit exponents of phenomenology in modern times were Kant and Hegel. But the philosopher who defined, organized, and structured not only the term "phenomenology," but gave it the official seal at the method level as well as the theoretical level and philosophical rank, was Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). From the beginning of this century, this method was employed by almost all of the philosophers and scientists in their corresponding works. From the philosophical angle, this system could be summarized in the manner described below.

In the first place, Husserl, in order to combat the limited scientific positivism and psychologism of his time —and also to safeguard philosophy from its transcendentalism— undertook the task of searching for a modern philosophical method which would permit philosophy to be viewed as "scientific." To accomplish this, philosophy —phenomenological— would have as its mission not only to provide an explanation of the facts (phenomena) in a scientific manner, but to arrive at a truth beyond the facts and to attempt to find a "universal" truth, searching for the "necessary relationships" that are present in the world of these facts or "phenomena."

The question remains, what is a "phenomenon"? As stated before, although the word has existed since antiquity, its meaning has varied tremendously. For Kant, for example, "phenomenon" is that which appears clearly, but he distinguishes it from "noumenon," stating that the "phenomenon" does not make known the essence or "noumenon" of the facts, of the things in themselves, impossible to reach by means of the method of *discursive* reasoning. For Husserl, on the contrary, if indeed the "phenomenon" is that which "appears," it also implies "noumenal / noumenic" essence. In other words, the "phenomenon" includes both parts: the *appearance* of the fact/thing and also its *essence*. The problem resides in discovering that hidden essence. This requires an effort that is accomplished *intuitively* by means of a special process. The term that he coined to describe this process was that of *epojé*, which signifies "reduction," "deputation," "reflective attitude" or, popularly known, as a "parenthesizing," a "bracketing." This so-called phenomenological process, or "method," consisted of a series of three fundamental reductive steps, or *epojés*.

Prior to discussing the three *epojés*, it would be convenient to say something about the so-called "natural" phenomenological attitude, prior to the *epojés*. This "natural" attitude is the one that everyone has in everyday life. It is associated with "perceiving" the surrounding world as something "alien" to one's "conscience." In other words, things are perceived as real, utilitarianly speaking. These things, this "natural" world has three characteristics: 1) the world, that is to say, the things *are there*, before me, outside of me, to which I relate. 2) It is true that these things are there, but it should be added, they are there *for me*, acquiring thus an environment of *reference* for my conscience. But, 3) this referential attitude of things for my conscience is impossible without the "natural" world, which is the *objective* medium, in which I establish my relationships.

This "natural" attitude is also called an "ingenuous" attitude by Husserl. One must abandon this "ingenuous" attitude, because it is based upon an "interested" attitude: it has a tendency to seek the transitory, the relative value of things, the exterior world that surrounds us. That "natural" or "ingenuous" attitude has to be replaced by another more serious and fundamental attitude: the "reflective" attitude, which is disinterested and which seeks the "essence" of things, the essence of the Being. It is indispensable and necessary to change attitudes and to move from an "ingenuous" attitude to a "reflective" attitude, if the phenomenological method is to be used.

This change of attitude is the basis for what Husserl calls *epojé*, that is to say, "reduction." In short, it means "to go to the things themselves" until they began to "make sense or have meaning" *for me*, for the person who perceives them. It is being able to *contemplate* things in their "essential nakedness." The three *epojés* or reductions referred to previously are:

1. First *epojé*: external or "phenomenic" reduction. This reduction consists in dispossessing, prescinding or detaching the phenomenon of everything *external* to it. It is a "parenthesizing" of everything that does not have anything to do with that phenomenon. (Parenthetically, a tangential observation is necessary here, and it is that, contrary to what it appears Bruce-Novoa is indicating, "parenthesizing" does *not* signify *including* within the parenthesis *only* that which is going to be considered or studied, but, on the contrary, by putting it in parenthesis everything is *excluded* that is of no interest or that should not be considered in the phenomenic study). This dispossessing of the phenomenon of everything *external* to it, means that it must be considered solely, stripped of everything that *is not of it in itself*. For example, *it* must be dispossessed of pre-judgments, of everything that had been previously acquired of that phenomenon. In this manner, *my* idea of "man" is not precisely the idea that the philosophers have of "man," nor it is necessarily what "man" *in himself* is. Consequently, I have to strip the phenomenon "man" inclusive of *my* own ideas and judgments that *I have* about "man," not taking this experience of mine into consideration upon studying the "phenomenon" man.

2) Second *epojé*: "eidetic" or "essential" reduction. This reduction is the second step of the phenomenological *epojé*. Once the "phenomenon" has been stripped of everything *external* to it, it is necessary for it to dispossess *itself*. In order to accomplish this, by means of an intellectual operation —which is not that of traditional discursive reasoning, but of "intuition"— a search for

the *essence* of the phenomenon must be undertaken. By means of the intuition, one seeks for that which presents or manifests itself *directly* and *immediately* to our conscience. Everything that is factic, accidental, contingent on the thing or phenomenon is "suppressed" ("is put in parenthesis"); thus, for example, everything that a phenomonic object has in width, length, weight, etcetera, is suppressed or reduced. By doing this, that *invariable* nucleus that is constantly identical to *itself* throughout all of the possible variations, is sought. That *nucleus* should be the "identicalness or sameness," the essence, the *eidōs*, the universal and necessary of the observed phenomenon. This *eidōs*, or essence, does not depend now on the accidental or variable of the phenomenon. This essence has to be pure, atemporal, and aspatial. These essences, contrary to what science does, are no longer captured by the natural experience, but by means of the "intuition," of the *reflection*, and of the "eidetic" contemplation. The process of phenomenological reduction does not end here, with the "eidetic" reduction, but goes further still. It involves "transcendental" reduction.

3) Third *epoché*: "transcendental" reduction. By way of the first ("phenomonic") reduction, the phenomenon is stripped of all ingredients or elements "external" to it. By means of the second reduction ("eidetic"), the phenomenon is dispossessed of its "own" accidental, variable, and contingent elements. Now it is necessary to strip another element from the triad: the "I-perceiver" or subject. By means of the "transcendental" reduction or *epoché* the cognizant subject is dispossessed of all that which is "not essential." This process has as its objective to obtain a *pure conscience*, a "transcendental I," which is the *essence* of the I.

By means of the first two phenomenological reductions, it is apparent that until now the captured essences made *reference* to a *conscience*, to a pure and transcendental I: "an I as *subject* of the *epoché*," the I that makes the other depurations or reductions possible and that, now, finds itself before itself discovering itself dispossessed of *itself*. There is no phenomenon unless there is a "subject" before which that phenomenon can present itself. But, who is that subject? That subject is "the conscience" of the depurated subject, before which that phenomenon presents itself. In this case, the subjective phenomenon —the I— presents itself before itself as a phenomenon of the pure conscience, depurating it, at the same time.

In this manner one arrives, perhaps, at a dangerous posture. By way of the three phenomenological reductions, the phenomenon is stripped: a) of all that which does not belong to it, b) of all that which belongs to it, but that is accidental to its essence, and c) the subject itself has to detach itself from all of that which does belong to it, that is to say, it has to be depurated by its pure conscience. There is, then, in brief, a peculiar situation: the world, as well as the phenomenon of the thing (essence), as well as the I-perceiver, dispossess themselves of all that which is not essential to them, in order to arrive, precisely in this way, at that which is essential to the phenomenon or phenomena. In reality, everything remains or can be summarized in two necessary factors or elements: the phenomenon-object entirely depurated, and the phenomenon I-subject and perceiver also entirely depurated. But, since there can be no phenomenon if there is no subject-perceiver, it follows that the former *depends* on the latter. Without embarking upon a detailed analysis, a dangerous conclusion emerges: that the depurated I —now "transcendentalized"— becomes the *center* of reference. One small push more in the process of

phenomenological "reductions" and we find ourselves before the *Absolute I*, of a strictly idealist nature. There is a return, in this manner, again to Hegel's idealist "Absolute Spirit."

Conclusion: Phenomenology, which wanted to convert the philosophical method—until now abstract, metaphysical, and transcendental—into a "scientific" one, will once again reach in this manner the supreme apex of idealism, from which it was trying to escape.

One final observation concerning this phenomenological process. If one reflects a little about what has been said to this point, certain parallels can be detected between the process of the *epojés* or "reductions" and that of the pathways, "dwellings" or *viae* of the ascetics and mystics, which was the process Saint Theresa and Saint John of the Cross had practiced and recommended. One can say this for two reasons: the Chicano Bruce-Novoa, as well as the Frenchman Maurice Blanchot—*servatis servandis*—, whom Bruce-Novoa cites, but does not analyze, discloses a certain procedure, a long process and mystic experience to reach the intimate nature of art and its vital function. The big difference is that, at the end of the long depurative process, the two critics do not appear to find the phenomenological *desideratum* of the transcendental and immutable, while the mystics, practicing a similar process, arrive at an "ideal" that guarantees them the immutable, permanent, and essential of the phenomenon or *thing itself*: the Other/God. The "deputation" —or *epojé* or *via*— of everything accidental, to attain a pure and mystical state, is constant, permanent, and pure. It does not follow that, what Bruce-Novoa claims, as well as what Maurice Blanchot presents—as will be seen later—is a guarantee of the deputation of the "chaotic discontinuity" or of Bruce-Novoa's "chaos"—or of Maurice Blanchot's "void" or "aperture"—in order to arrive at a purity before the presence and "ritual" of the artistic experience.

Phenomenology: intentional conscience and the transcendent I.

Another important aspect or element of the phenomenological philosophic method is the "intentionality of the conscience," which is a fundamental property or characteristic of phenomenology. According to Husserl, "the conscience is a current of lived experiences, it is the totality of the acts or of the intentional lived experiences" (García Mauriño, 13). "The conscience is always a conscience of *something*: that something is the object of the conscience that wants or desires something" (García Mauriño, 14). This desiring or wanting something is called "intentionality"—which comes from the Latin word *in-tendere*, that is to say, "to tend toward something." The conscience, then, "tends to capture" the essence of the thing, while intentionality "gives meaning" to the conscience and "orients" it toward the object.

Intentionality is bipolar: on one hand, it affects the conscience itself and, on the other, it affects the object of that conscience. It is a *mediator* between the conscience and the object. This bipolarity is described by Husserl, on one hand, as *noesis*, which is the "subjective" aspect of the conscience, and "the action of the subject" that tends toward the object; and, on the other, the *noema*, which, in turn, is "the content of the intentional act." It is not the object, but the "perception" of the object.

In conclusion of this section in reference to phenomenology, there are two observations to be

made. In the first place, that in this phenomenological process of *epojés* and of *intentionality* of the conscience, if indeed the conscience, by way of its intentionality, *directs itself, tends toward* an object, this orientation —like the bow and arrow tend toward the target— it is not a one-way orientation (=toward the object), but a two-way orientation: the conscience that directs itself toward the object, because it is intentionality, later "comes to itself," "returns to itself," "it returns to the subject" (Gutiérrez Sáenz, 183-184), which is the conscience, which is the I. And, in second place, as a corollary to what has been said, upon "returning home" —like the bee to the nectar— upon "retroceding" or "returning," it *becomes* a pure I, a transcendental I. The essences that the conscience has *perceived* and that have reached its I, are "objects" that are characterized because they "are given" to the conscience, to the pure I. On the other hand, the pure and transcendental "I" is characterized by "giving to itself," not to another. Then it follows that everything that *began* with the I —the intentional conscience of the I directed itself *toward* the object/phenomenon— *returned* toward the pure I, toward itself, in itself. In other words, the I became the beginning and end of the process: the phenomenon-object = pure I = absolute I = total idealism.

Phenomenology: an ascetical-mystical process. Bruce-Novoa had already stated —upon discussing the literary experience— that the latter would be analogously compared to five human experiences, among them the *mystical* experience. And after explaining that mysticism was one of various methods of escaping from the "chaos of discontinuity" and "dissolving into the transcendental being" (25), or the Other, he curiously described Saint John of the Cross as "that canonized master of eroticism" (25). To a certain point Bruce-Novoa —although for very different reasons— was not very far from a possible target or goal: that the phenomenological "process," in order to be able to arrive at the literary phenomenon, also very much resembles the ascetic-mystical "process," in order to achieve its own goal. There is no desire to prolong the discussion on this point, because it is not the objective of our study, but it is to be mentioned because there is a certain connection and parallelism. It will be explained below.

The three *epojés* and the intentionality of Husserl's phenomenological method have just been discussed. It is obvious —*mutatis mutandis*— that this same process —the three pathways/*viae*— which the mystics used to arrive at the religious phenomenon, was the principal object or goal of that method. All one has to do is glance at a book of mysticism, or of mystical schools, to observe this parallelism.

It is curious to note that, in the diverse schools of mysticism, there were diverse tendencies in their methods, as is true of philosophy and literary theory. To begin, as in phenomenology, three progressive steps, stages and moments, called *epojés*, can be distinguished in order to "depurate" the phenomenon, the world and the I; similarly, in mysticism three progressive steps, stages and moments can be distinguished to arrive at the phenomenon, spiritual center, "depurating it" at each step. These three steps —or *epojés*— are the so-called pathways (*viae*): 1) the "purgative" path, 2) the "contemplative" or "illuminative" path, and the 3) "unitive" path. 1) the "purgative" path: —or "phenomenological" or "external" *epojé*—is "the one in which the soul purifies itself from vices" (García López, 202), 2) the "illuminative" path —or "eidetic" or "essential" *epojé*— is the one in which the soul, already free of its previous defects, "*begins* to participate of the

Holy Spirit's gifts and to enjoy the presence of God" (García López, 202), and 3) the "unitive" path—or the I or "transcendental" *epojé*—, is the one in which, at the end, "one arrives at an intimate union with God. The *world* no longer signifies anything and the *soul* [the I] remains alone with the divinity" (García López, 202).

It is also engaging to observe the coincidence or parallelism with respect to the gnoseological posture between the two processes (the phenomenological and the mystical): both "reduce," that is to say, discard (= "parenthesize") the discursive method and both embrace the "intuitive" method. Husserl's posture in this respect has already been noted. An examination of the posture of several mystics will follow.

Father Juan de los Angeles (1536-1609)—a Spanish franciscan mystic— claims: "unitive and mystic knowledge is attained more by [...] *amorous* affects [intuitive] than by *speculation* and narrowness of [discursive] *understanding*" and, he adds—reinforcing again the method to be followed in mysticism— "one does not approach it [mystical knowledge] by *reason* and *arguing* [...], but by *desiring* and *loving*" (García López, 210).

If indeed Father Juan de los Angeles is referring to the intuitive "method"—versus the discursive— (as Husserl will do three centuries later) as being the most appropriate to reach the "mystical phenomenon," Saint Theresa and Saint John of the Cross speak of the linguistic "communication" to arrive at, by means of the "reductive" *epojés*, the "center" or "target" or "goal" sought during that process: the I/Other/God. This "communicative" form, that is to say, the "expressive" form which they employ to communicate what they are attempting to say, is the allegory. In the case of Saint Theresa, it is the allegory—perhaps taken from the books of chivalry— from the castle and from the "dwelling." In fact, that is the title of her most important work, *Libro de las "moradas" or Castillo interior/Book of "Dwellings" or Interior Castle*. In this work she imagines the soul as "a castle" composed of "many rooms or dwellings, some on the upper floors, others in the lower, others to the side; and in the *center*, or in the middle of all of these, is the *principal room*, which is where the secretive things between God and the soul occur" (García López, 214). It is interesting to note here that the first "dwellings or rooms" correspond to the "purgative" path, the second, to the "illuminative" path and the third—the dwelling in the center—to the "unitive" path. In other words, they correspond to Husserl's "phenomenic" *epojé*, the "eidetic" *epojé* and the "transcendental" *epojé*. (Blanchot claims that Mallarmé, Rilke, and Kafka apparently had similar experiences). Saint John of the Cross, in his poem "La noche oscura/The Dark Night," as well as his book in prose *La noche oscura del alma/The Dark Night of the Soul*, extensively employs, with excellent good results, the allegory or allegoric metaphor of the "castle" (as Saint Theresa) and that of "the dark night" (as did many other mystics, above all the Germanic). García López states: "In effect, the night, upon erasing the limits of things [upon depurating the "exterior" phenomena, or first *epojé*], evokes the eternal and sees in it [the soul] "a symbol of the *negation of the soul* [deputation of the I/subject phenomenon, or third *epojé*] at a *visible* level [deputation of the "world" phenomenon, or second *epojé*]" (216).

As can be observed, in addition to the methodological *coincidence* between phenomenology and

mysticism, one is confronted with an element, also important, of the phenomenological intentionality of conscience in both postures. Both "tend toward" an objective, a special phenomenon, a target that can be summarized (as Bruce-Novoa suggests and Blanchot presents) as that of the "center," that *center*, around which the *intentionality* of the conscience gravitates, whether it be a matter of literature or matter of mysticism. It is the final "place" or "space" in which the essence or essences are found, whatever the nature of this essence or essences may be.

Phenomenology: examples by Bruce-Novoa and Blanchot. To complete the brief exposition concerning the phenomenological philosophic method, two texts will be presented—one by Bruce-Novoa and another by Blanchot—which illustrate, although only partially, what was just explained. Bruce-Novoa states in *RetoSpace*: "If one poem could *center* Chicano literary space, it would be 'El Louie,'" (99). Bruce-Novoa presents the ("phenomenological?") analysis of the poem:

José Montoya's poem "El Louie" begins from the ultimate destruction of the temporal being: Louie is dead. Time has devoured Louie's *image*, but death, like literature, is atemporal and all of Louie's life is now simultaneously *fixed outside* of discontinuity. However, death is an invisible continuity, and so the artist must *retrieve* the disappeared *images* from time and give them a *space* within which they can become visible. That space is the *poem* which presents the images to us, the *images* of a *specific* man, Louie, while it consciously transforms him into a *prototype* of a group. In the *center* of the poem Louie's personal *presence* is *felt* in the use of the dialogue. His life, void of channel of expression, ends in a lonely hotel room. Yet the poem has *opened* a space for his life and death, to be replayed *continually*. Louie is retrieved from initial disappearance and he becomes the *image* of the pachuco, a particular Chicano type in which all of us can *identify* to some degree, and a Chicano particularity with which all men can identify to some degree, and on up the universalizing ladder. (Emphasis ours). (29)

Transcribed below, and selected from among multiple passages, are two taken from *L'Espace littéraire/The Space of Literature*, by Maurice Blanchot:

What fascinates us robs us of our power to give sense. It abandons its "sensory" nature, abandons the world, draws back from the world, and draws us along. It no longer reveals itself to us, and yet it affirms itself in a presence foreign to the temporal present and to presence in space. Separation, which was the possibility of seeing, coagulates at the very center of the gaze into impossibility [...]. Here we have an immediate expression of that reversal which is the essence of solitude. Fascination is solitude's gaze. (32)

Of whoever is fascinated it can be said that he does not perceive any real object, any real figure, for what he sees does not belong to the world of reality, but to the indeterminate milieu of fascination. This milieu is, so to speak, absolute. Distance is not excluded from it, but is immeasurable. Distance here is the limitless depth behind the image, a lifeless profundity, unmanipulable, absolute present although not given, where objects sink away when they depart from their sense, when they collapse into their image. (32)

It is unnecessary to analyze these texts in detail, since the attentive reader can very well understand the difference in the exposition of both texts —Bruce-Novoa's and Blanchot's. Both speak of poems, of spaces, of times, of centers, of intemporalities, etcetera. Two or three general observations will suffice. In the first place, Bruce-Novoa's text gives the impression that it is an explication or exposition regarding the outer crust and the superficial, that is to say, he mentions that which is *external* to the poem. One is not put "within" the phenomenon *per se*. He *alludes* to that which one can see beforehand: that Louie died, and that the poet, in order that the "images" concerning Louie's past life are not lost and erased from memory, describes them and shapes them on a piece of paper ("gives them a space") and, in this way, can present them to the reader. This guarantees that Louie will not be permanently lost in oblivion and that the reader can "record" and "imagine" what Louie was like, one among many pachucos of his time. There is nothing more, the analysis ends here.

On the contrary, Blanchot, in these two texts (as in the others) does not indicate what is already known, which is what Bruce-Novoa explicated: that the function of the poet is to provide literary "space" for certain "images," so that, on the one hand, they are not lost, and, on the other, so that the reader can "recognize himself" and "identify himself" with them when he reads the poem. Blanchot eliminates this —he takes it for granted— and, once we embark upon the "experience" of the reading, he involves himself fully in the analysis of how this "experience" occurs. He meticulously analyzes all of the involved (and involving) elements in that artistic experience. He does not speak of the *obvious*, but of that which is *recondite*. It is as if "he took us by the hand" through the "dwellings" of Saint Theresa's castle or through "the recondite places" of Saint John of the Cross' "dark night." It can be said that Blanchot synthesizes this entire "experience" in one word: "fascination." He does not talk *about* it. He takes and locates us "inside" of it.

Why fascination? Seeing presupposes distance, decisiveness which separates, the power to stay out of contact and in contact avoid confusion. Seeing means that this separation has nevertheless become an encounter. But what happens when what you see, although at a distance, seems to touch you with a gripping contact, when the manner of seeing is a kind of touch, when seeing is *contact* at a distance? What happens when what is seeing imposes itself upon the gaze, as if the gaze were seized, put in touch with the appearance? What happens is not an active contact, not the initiative and action which there still is in real touching. Rather, the gaze gets taken in, absorbed by an immobile movement and a depthless deep. What is given us by this contact at a distance is the image, and fascination is passion for the image. (32)

Expressing it in other terms —more phenomenological— Bruce-Novoa remains in the first step, stage or "dwelling" of the phenomenic process, that is to say, in the "phenomenic" or "exterior" *epojé*, in the "purgative" *path* of the mystics: he has prepared the road or "reduced" the groundwork to its basic limits. But he has not succeeded to the second *epojé*, which is the "eidetic" or that of the "essences," or "illuminative" *path*, nor has he been able to reach the third *epojé*, that of the "transcendental" I. On the contrary, Blanchot, —taking it for granted that the reader is already experienced and versed in the roadway of the three *paths/epojés*—, places the

reader fully in the third one: the "transcendental" *epojé* or the "unitive" *path*. Stating once again, in that "space," which is "the Center," the gaze and the glance, the sensorial and the accessorial, no longer have meaning. It is the "fascination," that which appropriates the "I" before the ineffable "ambience" of "The Center" (= the Other/God of the mystics).

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