

The Surname, the Corpus and the Body in Rudolfo A. Anaya's  
Narrative Trilogy

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*My purpose is to tell of bodies  
which have been transformed into  
shapes of a different kind.*

--Ovid, Metamorphoses, I, i.

I. The unconscious speaks more than one dialect

In his essays and interviews, Anaya often deploys significant terms such as "collective subconscious" and "archetypes", producing an overencoded reader within the margins of his narrative. At such revealing moments, Anaya is tacitly legitimizing with his authorial blessing a specific reader theoretically composed of recognizable psychological and cognitive features. A similar operation occurs frequently in his narrative, particularly after 1972, where one finds a dissemination of intertextual allusions and connections to a myth, a film, or a novel, thus providing a "background" which clarifies or expands the textual meaning. In essence, there appears to be in Anaya's selected discourse a compelling wish for a given "message" to be firmly grasped by his authorial audience and, concomitantly, a compulsive desire to beguile the gullible. It follows then that the "clues" being transmitted, or the "truths" being disclosed, remain concealed like Ultima's revelations, which are a riddle, almost a hieroglyph, therefore unknown to those who, like Antonio Márez Luna, do not have eyes to see. In a strange parallel, Antonio's fate in Bless Me, Ultima (=BMU) is that of the trusting authorial audience: to "misread" the signs and to be blind to the textual truth which, by the rules of the narrative game, becomes the site of the transcendental signified. The critical question, therefore, leads us directly into problems of reading, textual lordship, and, like Border coyotés, to a transgression of limits and undocumented entries.

Within Anaya criticism there is a growing consensus as to what is emblematic in Anaya, producing, as a result, a stereotype,

now associated with magical realism, a geographical mystique, dream narratives, and the repression of history. In our desire to return to the Anaya who remains underneath a mountain of critical documentation (the record of "influences", sources, and alleged allegorical meanings), the question herein posited is that of an undocumented reading: what would it be like? As a transgression of the Anaya stereotype, it would be a reading that is undomesticated, alien, hence deportable. Since that is my intent in this critical study, the ground to be covered--although limited to the range of a narrative trilogy constituted, according to Anaya, by BMU, Heart of Aztlán (=HOA), and Tortuga (=T)--has as a comprehensive horizon his complete narrative corpus, from BMU to A Chicano in China (=ACC). The resolution is to accept Anaya's implicit challenge to read his trilogy as his autobiography and, along the way, to propose other theoretical entries into Anaya's narrative--e.g., the problem of the subject; the analysis of the "unconscious" in narrative texts; Anaya's concept of the act of writing, of the Body and the Name-of-the-Father or surname; and the theoretical conditions for a reading of Chicano "autobiography". Turning now the polemical foil towards Anaya-the-Father of his works, the intent is also to adopt an alien discourse, one of undocumented Luna(cy)--to echo Anaya's, therefore in the manner of a "speaking double."<sup>1</sup>

Based on cultural transgressions, Anaya's narrative accomodates both undocumented and coyote readings in so far as the latter is an active signifier in the history of racial relations in New Mexico. By force of the predatory and nocturnal signifier, our intended reading must deal with the register of "illegal" crossings, the smuggling of foreign bodies across a frontier, and the violation of a racial code by the transgression, even consented penetration, of one body by its racial opposite--Mexican or Anglo--, particularly when such transgression results in conception. The signifier "coyote", according to Theresa Meléndez,

has a range of meanings that have little, if anything, in common. However, the tenor of most of the approximately fifteen connotations, is attempting to bridge opposing forces or cross boundaries, as in the coyote of mixed ancestry, or in case of the smuggler who literally crosses borders.<sup>2</sup>

Born in New Mexico, how could Anaya escape from the pressing realities of local unwritten laws and social codes? In his narrative one easily locates reconciling figures who attempt to bridge differences or cross boundaries (e.g., Ultima, Crispín, Salomón), and coyotes of mixed ancestry (e.g., Cindy's "unborn" child conceived by Benjie in HOA). Meléndez discusses various coyote signifieds which include the stigma of offspring born from interracial unions (Mexican + Anglo), generally considered "outcasts" and "perpetual outsiders"; youngest members of a family (in this sense, Antonio and Benjie are coyotes); the underdog or dupe; the coyote as "other" or trickster; and the coyote's power of identity transfiguration or metamorphosis, and his ability to travel "from one level of meaning to another."<sup>3</sup> The free play afforded by the coyote signifier reveals other dimensions of Anaya's narrative, keeping the textual "meaning", like the Márez blood, in continuous dispersal and disjunction. Within this nomadism of the signifier, the coyote reading scans Anaya's ideological dislocations which occur after BMU. Under the coyote or undocumented reading, the Anaya stereotype splits, shatters in Anaya fragments, a plural Anaya who, nonetheless, retains traces of the same. This Anaya who is the same, though always different, is captured in the metaphor, that rhetorical operation which carries signifieds "from one place to another", where comparison is always an implicit possibility. How else is one to think or interpret Anaya's obsessive play with a few signifiers, such as the tree, the bridge, the apple, the mountain, and the river?

Anaya criticism tends to accept the self-referential commentaries of Anaya towards his narrative as the ultimate source of textual authority (the question seems to be, who knows more about Anaya's narrative than Anaya?), thereby admitting the author as the Fa(mo)ther of his literary creation. As a result, critics tend to indulge in unproblematical assumptions regarding the identity between author, narrator, and protagonist, assumptions which, I admit, Anaya continues to encourage. In this respect, Anaya's narrative fiction has become virtually his autobiography, and Antonio's prophetic powers have been transferred to the "real" Anaya. In a recent interview with César González, Anaya responds, "Let the critics criticize. Qué saben?"<sup>4</sup>

As his "speaking double", I ask the reader, what do you know? Test your knowledge in the following passage written by Anaya as his boat glides through the Yangtze River, and his mind drifts across distant memories of his life in New Mexico:

my task as a writer is to enter those streams of time. I remember the early fear and fascination I felt as a young man when I first discovered this...this is the work of a brujo, the task of the shaman, to fly into the other realms of time or heaven or hell and to rescue the souls of our characters. This is the work of the writer, to learn to fly. (ACC, p. 123)

Why do these passages seem to be a parody of Carlos Castañeda, forcing a smile, perhaps laughter, followed by the impression that Anaya is "misleading" his critics on purpose, leading them to further "research" on undisputed influences, sources, and authorial secret powers? As I will in pages ahead propose, this passage is an example of Anaya's rhetoric of disclosure and concealment, for in the inscribed cosmological topography (heaven, earth, and hell), Anaya is revealing much of the "cosmological" structure of his narrative trilogy, with BMU, HOA, and T, respectively, as the texts concerned with each plane or level. Anaya critics, however, would read this passage as a "proof" that Antonio is a brujo and a curandero, for isn't he Anaya's double? What is certain, at least in my view, is that Anaya's autobiography can not be understood by anecdotal resemblances with Antonio, Benjie, and Tortuga; furthermore, if the reader's generic definition of autobiography is "a retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality," then the reader may ask, how can Anaya's autobiography be read in a narrative known for its elaborate rhetoricity?<sup>5</sup> Either Anaya was a child prodigy (and has become its adult version), or else he is rubbing the shepherd's wool over your eyes.

For the purposes of this study an autobiography can not be a "retrospective prose narrative" recounting the life of an "individual" but, instead, that narrative register with intermittent "slips of the tongue", recurrent thematic patterns, and the so-called obsessive metaphors which manifest the discourse of the unconscious. The perception of Anaya's "I", as it remains concealed behind his narrative and self-disclosures, can not, as a result, be seen as a unified,

integrated self who resembles the "real" Anaya; the "I" with the Anaya surname and imbricated in an autobiographical narrative, is a linguistic construct or, in Jameson's view (via Lacan), "one further text in its turn, a text on the level with the other literary texts of the writer in question and susceptible of forming a larger corpus of study with them."<sup>6</sup>

In an interview, Anaya claims that "beneath the surface" which is Chicano culture, "we will find the archetypes and the values and the primal symbols which we share in common with all mankind."<sup>7</sup> To be consistent with my coyote reading, I will invert Anaya's cultural postulate and propose that a theory of the unconscious that inscribes the subject in an immediate historico-cultural setting is far more promising to Chicano critical discourse, and to Anaya criticism, than the vague notions of the collective unconscious and the archetypes. If narrative is to remain one of the registers of the Chicano "experience"--however loosely defined, as long as such narrative has a claim to its historical particularity--, Chicano critical theory must question the determinism and false universality of such propositions, wherein cultures are understood as deviations from an original mother culture (to which one must return to find harmony), or as developmental stages of mankind's march towards improvement and globalization (a Western idea).<sup>8</sup>

In sum, since Anaya considers his narrative trilogy to be autobiographical, the task will be to examine the traces of psychic self-inscription; therefore, the narrative one reads is not a "veritable" account of the real life of an individual, but the rhesus or hieroglyphs which recontain the subject's psychography. It is in this semiotic context of the unconscious that Freud's proposition--"the unconscious speaks more than one dialect"--borders and crosses into Anaya's Pentecostal discourse.<sup>9</sup>

## II. An Eye, An "I", And Anaya

In Anaya's rhetoric of disclosure and concealment, the eye is the main organ of an exceptional sensorium. There seems to be always a punctual narrative return to a paradigmatic encounter between a spectator (e.g., Antonio, Anaya, etc.) and the scopic master (e.g.,

Ultima or one of her counterparts.) A variant of this encounter occurs in relation to the scopic adept (the spectator who suddenly knows "how to see"), and the New Mexican landscape whose beauty is revealed thanks to the teachings of a wise benefactor (again, Ultima, old ancianos, Cruz, etc.) To illustrate this point, let's open our eyes to one of the first instances in which Anaya, in an operation that transforms narrative fiction into autobiography, skillfully dislocates the original function of Antonio's encounter with Ultima:

I feel constantly in touch with that epiphany which opens me up to receive the power in my landscape...my vision was limited until I was taught to see the stark beauty which surrounded me. I was fortunate to meet a few, old ancianos who taught me to respond to my landscape and to acquire the harmony which is inherent between man and his place...Antonio's eyes had to be opened by Ultima so that he can see for the first time the beauty of the llano and the valley.<sup>16</sup>

Anaya's account clearly divides his life in two phases: one of scotomized vision ("my vision was limited"), and another of scotopic perception, acquired through the teachings of "a few, old ancianos." In addition, the differences between "fiction" (e.g., BMU) and "real life" are swiftly cancelled with the explicit reference to Antonio's epiphanic experience as having been Anaya's, but rewritten in fictional form. In other words, as of 1977 Anaya claims an autobiographical affiliation with Antonio; interviews and a recent autobiographical essay expand this kinship to Benjie and Tortuga which, at first impression, and in terms of narrative characterization, might amount to making apples and oranges analogous simply because of their geometrical symmetry.

Anaya concludes his essay with the admission that, in spite of his disclosures, they really explain "only a small part of the creative process that occurs in writing."<sup>17</sup> For those of us who have read Anaya over the years, this passage marks a moment of unconcealment, for Anaya's "journeys", as undertaken by his dramatis personae (e.g., Antonio, Clemente, Salomón, and perhaps Benjie-Tortuga), always end up in unexpected diversions, having journeys that are unfulfilled, unconsummated, with the object of a hero's desire (his personal quest) remaining forever absent, continuously replaced by illusory surrogates or unexpected reversals of fate (e.g., Antonio). The impression of having been in Anaya's intimate circle (what Anaya has given you) is

thus shattered, and some may be left assuming there must be more in Anaya but, due to limitations of space, or authorial discretion, it is better left unsaid (therefore, Anaya takes away). In a concluding comment, Anaya describes the act of writing as follows:

The private writing place becomes a madhouse, and the writer a mere guide as to the course of the character's lives...that which is honest to me and therefore to my writing comes from my deepest felt experiences...the exploration into my world is a process through which I come to know myself and my earth better. For the moment, I am content to continue this exploration, and to convey to my reader the center of my universe. (p. 102)

If one observes Anaya's metaphors of body ingress or irruption ("that epiphany which opens me up", "Antonio's eyes had to be opened by Ultima"), with variants of body fragmentation or bricolage (e.g., the Frankenstein model in HOA, but particularly in T), an anticipation will be posited regarding the "splitting" of an ego which, in the quoted passage, occurs in a field where Reason or Conscious Mind are subverted by the rebellion of lunatic characters who--now masters of the house--delegate to Anaya the task proper to a "mere guide", to the doorman of the asylum, confounded by the logomania and collective madness of the "unconscious" residents emerging from Anaya's "deepest felt experiences." The act of writing, as a result, is metaphorized as a subversive drama taking place in the writer's psyche. In a passage which appeared almost ten years later, Anaya returns to a description of his encounter with Ultima:

She laid her hand on my shoulder and I felt the power of the whirlwind. I closed my eyes and saw the heart of the lake, the deep pool of my subconscious, the collective memory and history of my people...In the process of writing, the serious writer enters planes of vision and reality that cannot be induced with alcohol or drugs...When the juices flow and the story begins to write itself, the soul of the writer seems to enter the story. The trance can only be explained as a kind of spiritual high...I feel that connection right now as I write these ideas down. The flow is natural. Life itself...Ultima opened my eyes and let me see the roots of my soul. (A, p.23)

The extraordinary experiences are, again, of at least two kinds: a personal encounter and the process of writing; both experiences could be rewritten as the inspiration and the actual process of creation of a literary artifact. But ~~where~~ one to do so, would it not be a rationalization of Anaya's passage, done in an attempt to reinstall Reason in Anaya's discourse? In other words, can we read Anaya literally (and seriously)? I will return to this point shortly; incidentally, notice that the visual metaphors remain active ("closed my eyes," "Ultima opened my eyes"), though now inverted, since the revelation is no longer of the landscape (1977 essay), but of Anaya's innermost being--hence, his spiritual landscape. The scopic perception, as a result, is the "vision" of a recontained collective history; Anaya, in an extraordinary moment triggered by Ultima, or by the process of writing, becomes a microcosm of a people, the historical allegory of Chicanos. These traces of Anaya's self-inscription in his narrative have, undoubtedly, been made possible by the allegorical readings produced by Anaya criticism in the 1970's. Anaya, after BMU, appears to have a long ear (although not a perceptive eye) pointing towards his critics.

Besides metaphors of visual perception (from scotomized to scopic precision, from a life of darkness to one of light and an extraordinary sensorium), one also finds seminal metaphors which suggest procreation; writing, then, becomes the analog, or sublimated act, of sexual, bodily ingress, leading to conception and birth of the literary "child" ("when the juices flow...the soul of the writer seems to enter the story... The flow is natural. Life itself"). The artistic experience associated with writing is thus returned to one of its classical topos, a regression to a "life" origin where literary creation is linked conceptually to childbirth, with the sublimated difference--almost erased from our vision--resting on Anaya's reversal to penetration and conception as if to emphasize the moment during which the writer, in an instant of divine frenzy (therefore unconsciously and involuntarily), inscribes himself in his story or narrative ("the writer seems to enter the story"). Doesn't this artistic phenomenon coincide, in an imaginary crossing of cosmological borders, with the role of the Archangel Gabriel in the Immaculate Conception, serving, as "he" does, as



# the supreme mediator between Heaven and Earth, between God and a mortal woman (hence, a cosmic coyote)? It is in the context of "forbidden marriages" or reprehensible conjunctions that the Immaculate Conception or eclipses are to be understood, along with much of Anaya's narrative and his view regarding writing, either as procreation or self-creation: "I wrote everyday. I created my own spirit." (A, p. 24)

In this sense, then, for Anaya each scriptural "intercourse", resulting in a published text, is the equivalent of a child, the carrier of his surname and known from then on as a member of the Anaya narrative corpus. Anaya's "body", in other words, increases with each "child", who now become kinship units of a mystical body which unites the offspring in a spiritual "brotherhood" or in a narrative community. Yet the writer's task corresponds to the work of fallen Adam; the artist, consequently, is cursed, procreating "children" who are flawed from birth: "Perhaps the writer or artist is a person who is damned...we must flee into writing to assuage the pain." (A, 23)

An overview of Anaya's descriptions of the scriptural act allows us, at this point, to "freeze" a thematic pattern that illustrates, from a different angle, Anaya's rhetoric of disclosure and concealment. Whereas in 1977 Anaya stressed the writer's role as a "mere guide" in a "madhouse", and writing, now beyond control, as the subversion of the unconscious, in 1986 the writer goes into a trance ("spiritual high") when touched by an apparition ("She laid her hand on my shoulder"), thereby entering into "planes of vision and reality" wherein the writer discovers the nature of his collective history and, following that initial stage, enters into a "creative plane" in which self-inscription and self-procreation are made possible ("I wrote everyday. I created my own spirit:"). In his recent book of Asian travels (ACC), on the contrary, the scriptural act is analogous to the act of flying (of a brujo) into different "streams of time" in "heaven or hell", "to rescue the souls of our characters."

In the four quoted passages, the act of writing occurs either (1) in cosmological planes (heaven or hell, through the brujo); (2) in a madhouse (through the "mere guide", i.e., the writer); (3) in

the writer's desk, turned metaphorically into a marital bedchamber; or (4) into the place of atonement and remembrance of former pains. It follows, then, that instead of pointing at Anaya's contradictions, one must--like the coyote signifier which traverses various levels of meaning--be watchful for a common denominator which binds cosmological planes, a madhouse, a bedroom, and an expiatory site. Writing, as a result, more than the rescuing of souls, the surveillance/super-vision of lunatic characters, the act of (self)procreation, or the act of atonement, is marked in all four instances by a crossing of frontiers, namely, from heaven to hell, from reason to madness, from a scotomized vision to scotopic perception in which vision trances are a "spiritual high", therefore almost equivalent to an orgasmic communion long after the entrance into a higher form of frontier ruled by Desire. The parallel between the act of writing and this moment of perfect vision is made explicit by Anaya in the 1977 essay in the context of Clemente Chávez's epiphany (HOA):

At that moment time is infused with power. As man and woman at the peak of their love break the shell of solitude that holds them apart and in tension, man and place achieve a similar climax in the realization of this essential metaphor. (p. 100)

Anaya's scriptural act, on the other hand, is a solitary activity where only the mind, the eye, and the hand-in-pen are at work. If such activity is metaphorically an act of penetration, transgression, and procreation, it resembles, to a greater extent, the youthful diversion of onanism in which one's Desire leads to an exploration, narcissistic to the highest degree, of oneself in a kind of "spiritual high". The sterility of the act, as a result, is compensated (in its sublimated form) by its scriptural counterpart, the Book's becoming into itself, the off-spring of "that stage of creativity, when the juices flow and the story begins to write itself". In sum, Anaya's repeated associations of the act of writing with vision, sex, and knowledge, suggest the presence of an intricate triad in which, as Freud clearly proposes in his essay "The Uncanny", an eye is transformed into a phallic icon; castration, consequently, is that condition in which man is blind, thus unable to read or solve riddles:

this fear of damaging or losing one's eyes is a terrible fear of childhood...A study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that a morbid anxiety connected with

the eyes and with going blind is often enough a substitute for the dread of castration. In blinding himself, Oedipus, that mythical law-breaker, was simply carrying out a mitigated form of the punishment of castration.<sup>12</sup>

The rewriting of Freud's idea of castration as the radical separation from the (m)Other adds a Lacanian dimension that makes castration applicable to males as well as females, thus transforming the Phallus into something more than just a male organ. Anaya's triad of vision, sex, and knowledge subsumes under its dominion notions of females as purveyors of truth ("Woman, appear!...I seek to go to the truth, the door which opens to the mystery of the universe," ACC, p. 100), of scopic adepts whose bodies "tremble" in ecstasy during an epiphanic communion (e.g., when Anaya's characters have the uncanny feeling of "having been there before"), and so on.

In this incessant crossing of frontiers and acts of body ingress-- all such acts depicted as personal moments of "truth"--, an important occasion is Anaya's marriage: he married "a woman from Kansas." (A, p. 22). Anaya, consequently, crossed a state frontier, marrying into a different "clan", similarly to BMU's Gabriel and María, with the difference that this "woman from Kansas" becomes Anaya's "other" or, at times, his "double"; the latter, both in the sense of a relation to Knowledge, or in scopic abilities when viewing landscapes:

She is glued to the new and mysterious sights the river presents us; she whispers she has been here before, in another time...The people are friendly, all smile, they act like they have never seen a Chicano walking with a Gringa down the streets of Chengdu...We wave. We are especially attracted to the babies. (ACC, p. 121, 99, my italics)

How do these people from Chengdu "act" when they see a Chicano walking in China with a "Gringa"? Do they "see" the differences between a Chicano and a Gringa, but conceal their prejudice ("are friendly, all smile") in regards to inter-racial couples? Are they really aware of such differences, or is it Anaya's projected vision that "sees" again a New Mexican street (he "has been here before") in China, a street in which Mexican-Anglo couples would definitely be noticed? The knowledge of having transgressed an unwritten law, a regional

(racist) taboo, does it create a consciousness of being constantly watched (by God, fate, society), therefore the indefatigable attempts to conceal, defer, camouflage, writing in riddles, personal codes and, at times, in a discourse of madness? Or is it that Anaya fears, more than Anglo racism (which exists), the "criticism" (being a Chicano writer) of some of his ethnocentric Chicano brethren (which exist, too)? In HOA, Anaya treats the subject of Anglo-Mexican unions (as I will shortly discuss), but from a negative, and presumably not personal, point of view.<sup>13</sup>

In this crossing of frontiers, Anaya is beyond ethnocentrism, both by reasons of ancestry and personal conviction (e.g., in BMU, the image of the city--Guadalupe--is associated with a multiracial population), and in so being he duplicates his mother's frontier marriage: "My mother left the river valley to marry a man from the llano, a vaquero, a man who preferred to ride horseback and work with cattle, not a farmer." (A, p. 16) From this autobiographical disclosure, one is suddenly back within the pages of BMU, with Antonio "torn" and undecided between the Márez (people of the llano) and the Luna (people of the river valley), and ultimately deciding that he will be both (of course, not knowing that his "destiny" is unrelated to his genealogical past; this does not apply to Anaya because he is not the offspring of a Mexican-Anglo marriage). But in the return to BMU, one brings back an insight regarding Anaya's narrative as auto(psycho)graphy: Anaya's mother was first married to "a man from the llano", his name being Salomon Bonney. This name is split and inverted in Anaya's narrative trilogy, as if symbolic of a double parentage, perhaps a homage to a mother's memory (of a former husband). In BMU, one reads that Gabriel's friends,

old amigos like Bonney or Campos or the Gonzales brothers would come by to visit. Then my father's eyes lit up as they drank and talked of the old days and told the old stories. (BMU, p. 3)

In the closing of the narrative trilogy, Salomón is Tortuga's "spiritual guide" and almost a voice from the underworld or from the beyond. Whereas Chicano literary critics may have been led to assume a symbolical correspondence between Salomón and its biblical antecedent, the name may have a different, more personal meaning. If we remember

Salomón's story, an instructive feature is his own crossing of frontiers:

My father was a farmer who planted corn on the hills along the river...a wild urge in my blood drove me from him. I went to join the tribe along the river... I forgot the fields of my father...I, Salomón, tell you this so that you may know the meaning of life and death... I tell you this because since that day I have been a storyteller, forced by the order of my destiny to reveal my story. (T, p. 22)

Exogamy is the foundation of a kinship system (Mexican + Anglo) essential to an understanding of Anaya's narrative, encoded in the conventional Spanish/Indian opposition, long resolved in Mexico, culturally as well as racially. In Anaya's oblique discourse, then, he crosses a frontier to marry a "woman from Kansas"; his mother, likewise, travels across a frontier line and marries a "man from the llano"; Salomón, in turn, joins a "tribe along the river", forgetting the fields of his father and obeying a wild urge in his blood. Anaya's secret mythology seems to be governed more by the fate of Aeneas than that of Ulysses, recapitulating a theme dear to the Lost Generation, namely, that you can not go home again.<sup>14</sup> Anaya reveals in his autobiographical essay that the marriage between his father (who had a daughter by a previous marriage) and his mother (who had a son and a daughter by Salomon Bonney) resulted in their having seven sons and daughters besides the original ones (therefore, ten children total, in three "sets", numbers which surface periodically in Anaya's narrative, sending most of us to consult books on numerology, wondering about Anaya's "hidden meanings"; but then, again, what do critics know? Qué saben?) Anaya's birth, under this light being shed by the rays of chance, could be seen as the will of fate, the intervention of an "invisible hand" in matters terrestrial: someone died so that another could live. On the occasion of a <sup>m</sup>comentary on King Lear and Cordelia, Freud writes the following observation:

One might say that the three inevitable relations man has with woman are here represented: that with the mother who bears him, with the companion of his bed and board, and with the destroyer. Or it is the three forms taken on by the figure of the mother as life proceeds: the mother herself, the beloved who is chosen after her pattern, and finally the Mother Earth who receives him again.<sup>15</sup>

Ultima, mother, and wife, as a result, represent women of vision, possessors of knowledge, and transgressors themselves of frontiers. Anaya, the youngest male in the family, finds his truth in "three inevitable relations", and acquires, in his father's eyes, the symbolism of Death: "A silence fell between me and my father. Why? Did the familiar story tell him that to his way of life his youngest son was lost?" (A, p.17)

Besides these frontier crossings, other rhetorical variants, such as that of scriptural creation, knowledge acquisition, or the revelation of a truth, appear articulated by Anaya in other metaphors of body ingress, as in the passage from ACC where Anaya describes the symbolical conjunction between one of China's supreme cultural codes (the dragon) and Anaya's body:

I sleep, and in my fitful sleep, a dragon enters my body...Only when I no longer resist does China rest in my heart. The dragon settles itself in me, its eyes breathing fire through my eyes...The tail of the dragon spreads to my feet. The dragon sex now goes into my balls and penis. Finally, it has entered me completely. I am still. I have made my peace with China. When I awaken, I feel refreshed, a new man. (ACC, pp. 45-46; also, p. 194)

The comprehension of a foreign body, like the smuggling of an alien code, is subject to appropriation in so far as the "seeker of truth" makes room for a metaphorical interracial union (Chinese/Mexican) the trespassing of a frontier (in a dream, or while awake), like the entry into the body of the "other", has the lure and the conditions for learning a "truth" or, as what the cliché refers to, for personal growth while one travels in foreign lands. In the illustration of the dragon, the union is both a reprehensible conjunction (fabulous beast + human), as well as a forbidden marriage: China (through its metonymical male dragon) and a Chicano (who becomes a metaphorical bride-- "Finally, it has entered me completely"--in the tradition of the great mystics).

In retrospect, every moment of revelation and of extraordinary cognition in Anaya's narrative is rhetorized in imagery of visual trances, in a discourse of rapture and communion where one hears/sees a trembling body, an elevation to a plane of eternity (the "freezing" of time), and the brief disclosure of harmony and perfection; also,

and as a recollection of a memory, a suggestion of momentary paralysis ("it has entered me completely. I am still"), the result of a transgression in the form of a symbolical rape which concludes in communion and renewal ("I feel refreshed, a new man").

The study of Anaya's "autopsychography", as rhetorized in his narrative trilogy, must then be based on these moments of self-inscription, of textual ingress by the "soul" of the writer (one of Anaya's favorite images), or, conversely, on the penetration of the writer's metaphorical, or oneiric, body by the presence of the alien "other" (e.g., China's dragon) which rushes in, undocumented, alien, undomesticated and nocturnal, crossing borders and permeating all with its faculty of comprehension and containment and making you feel refreshed and new.

### III. The Surname, the Corpus, and the Body

Anaya's autobiographical essay, with its unnumbered twelve sections and his claim to have been born with the umbilical cord around his neck like a hanged man (#12), shows Anaya at his best in terms of the rhetoric of disclosure and concealment. The narcissism of Anaya-the-wonder-child is balanced with the telling of bitter memories, such as the accidental shooting of Santiago Chávez's eye ("a bad memory of that haunts me still", p. 18); Anaya's crippling accident and the ensuing loneliness; the sudden racism which divided Anglos and Mexicans in Anaya's immediate world ("We who had always been brothers now separated into Anglos and Mexicans. I did not understand the process", p. 19, my italics); then, a shaken faith, a lost love, the unfulfilled parenthood, and the bothersome hounding of detractors: the literary critics. What gathers these memories within one conceptual framework is the fragmentation, "imbalance", or the Lacanian concept of castration, which continuously threatens Anaya's sense of communion, unity, and harmony. Of all, the crippling accident seems to have marked Anaya for life ("the scars I still carry", p. 20), so one must examine such incident as it is found inscribed in Anaya's narrative:

I have not spoken or written about this accident before...  
 I learned that indulging in confession did not really  
 help me...We learn very well to hide our disabilities...  
 we are reminded how little our friends know us...we learn  
 to hide our pain, to live within, to build a new faith  
 inside the shell of bones and muscle. (p. 20)

The pronominal shift from "I" to "we" is subtle and almost an unregistered transition from Anaya's youth to the narrative characters ("we") who recontain his "autobiographical" past (for Antonio does propose to build a new faith, BMU, p. 236; and Tortuga develops faith inside his cast-shell, while preparing for the spring miracle: the recuperation of body movement, almost analogous to rising from the grave.) Anaya adds: "It is easier to ascribe those times and their bittersweet emotions to my characters." (p. 22)

One noticeable feature of Anaya's characterization is the utilization of doubles (e.g., Antonio/Florence, Tortuga/Danny) which act as elements of plot development or as semantic units in the narrative's ideological field. These doubles become intertwined through the narrative in a continuum of questioning dialogues (e.g., God's mercy), instances of despair, or as demonic parodies of the counterpart (e.g., Bengie of Jasón in HOA). The category of the double, then, operates at different semantic planes, either establishing correspondences (e.g., Trementina sisters and clay dolls; Comanche Indians and bundles for crematory ritual), or parodies (e.g., Tenorio, and his daughters, of Ultima; the diurnal Antonio, while awake, a parody of the nocturnal Antonio, who dreams, etc.) Incidentally, it should be noted at this point that Anaya's trilogy is not a "trilogy" in the Balzacian tradition, where narrative characters reappear and are recognizable in different narrative spaces; in Anaya, the characters change from one text to the next. For example, in BMU, Chávez's brother is killed by a war veteran (Lupito), an act which serves to stress the war's "madness"; in HOA, on the contrary, Chávez's brother is "murdered by that pinche tejano who couldn't keep his wife home" (p. 4). Now the reason is adultery between a Mexican and an Anglo's wife (the "tejano"); Clemente Chávez, therefore, changes along with his brother's identity: in BMU, Clemente's pain at losing his brother moves him to mob rule and lynching; in HOA (now identified as "Clemente" Chávez), conversely, he is portrayed as the leader who wants to transform the world through the "fire of love".



What binds the trilogy together, then, is Anaya's psychographical inscription which operates on two levels simultaneously: within the text (through doubles), or between texts (through inversions and correspondences). "Outside" of the text, Anaya remains the same in his position against war and violence: in BMU, Chávez's anger becomes part of a global "madness"--World War II (therefore, he is wrong); in HOA, Chávez represents "pacifism" (he is prudent, therefore he is right), as opposed to Lalo (and other Chicano "radicals" of the 60's) who wants revolution, now.

Anaya's brush with death is narrated almost as poignantly as is his professed religious disenchantment ("a faith shaken"), which surfaces in BMU through dialogues between Antonio and Florence. The friend who saves Anaya from drowning is Eliseo ("I remember smiling," A, p. 20), a friend who is rewritten as Mike at the conclusion of the narrative trilogy, Mike being the one who saves Tortuga from drowning ("strong hands lifted me out of the water...I smiled," T, p. 125). In BMU, however, Antonio does not drown; his friend Florence is the one who has no one to lift him out of the water. Florence, then, is the only "double" who integrates the trinity formed by Anaya-Antonio-Tortuga (or Benjie), either through the theme of "a shaken faith" or a (barely<sup>e</sup> escaped) drowning; yet, he is also the one who represents a radical difference: Florence is blonde.

He was tall and thin, with curly blonde hair that fell to his shoulders. I had never seen anyone like him, so white and speaking Spanish. He reminded me of one of the golden angel heads with wings. (BMU, p. 33, my italics)

Does one perceive at this narrative instance a possible idealization of "Anglo" features (rewritten as Spanish), or a possible unconscious pull, desire, to merge with that "other"--be like him--who also speaks Spanish, therefore the implied possibility of a crossing of a racial as well as linguistic frontier (by a coyote)? Just imagine a tall, thin, and blonde boy talking to a short, dark boy (Antonio) about God's unmerciful ways, and have this blonde boy drown (Anaya's what-if-I-had-drowned question, answered with a character's death). Is Florence (in the underworld of Anaya's cosmology) a code character for Salomón and, ultimately, for Salomon Bonney? What is clear is that