Migration and Intercultural Identities in Relation to Border Regions

International Conference 27-29 May 2010

The border revisited: analysis of space in Rolando Hinojosa's novel 'The Valley'
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The construction and questioning of intercultural identity has been fundamental for most of the Chicano authors. In this paper, I will examine the novel 'The Valley' from Chicano author Rolando Hinojosa whose work has been classified rightly within the "Narrative of self-identity" (Hernández-Gutiérrez 1994). The novel was originally written in Spanish ('Estampas del Valle', 1973). The English autotranslation from 1983 is a "recast" of the Spanish novel as the author changed the structure of the book (Klaus Zilles 2001). I will analyze the conflictive perceptions of space in the novel's depiction of the life of the Chicanos in the Lower Río Grande Valley of Texas. The recreation of this geographic space has led the author to the invention of a fictitious place called Klail City. By reinventing space, Hinojosa contributes to the collective search for identity of the Chicanos. In my analysis I will pay attention to both the macro viewpoint (Texas and the valley) and the micro viewpoint (the neighborhood, the bar and the house). This investigation also aims to question the concept of "the border/la frontera". The term "border" does not always coincide with a single geographic line, but is mostly interpreted as a dynamic concept that also refers to the border region, including both sides of the border, following the interpretation given by Robert McKee Irwin (2007). The narrator of 'The Valley' states it very clearly when he refers to the Rio Grande: "the river's a jurisdictional barrier, but that's about it" (78). Not all Chicanos are "migrants", in the strict sense of the term. A lot of characters in 'The Valley', especially the main characters, are born in the United States and even their families have lived there for generations as this area belonged to Mexico before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848). Through the analysis of space in this novel I want to get to a better understanding of the complex relationship that Texas Mexicans are having, on the one hand with Anglo Texans and, on the other, with Mexicans from Mexico.