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**The Location of Writing:  
A Reading and Conversation with  
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[Hipertexto](#)

### First presentation

**HS:** ...to explain myself to myself and is called "These writers sense of place." So, I should like to begin with a quote from the men and this is from their participation in the Texas' Santa Fe expedition of 1841 and while it was set in Mexico city, it offered Santa Ana his freedom in exchange of the Republican Fest. Those words of 1842 were said by the men who signed the Declaation of Independence who observed the changes of the Republic. Later on, because a delegate vote contributed to the signing of the first State Constitution and it became the lesson to the State's Legislation and worked for a succession and this is what he said: "I was already here in Texas and that for sure I knew. I would like the land affirmably for I know that it is just and dry, one small life for this whole price for this cause so be it, because I talk, personally willing to die, I will never persuade (?) Texas..."

These words written by José Antonio Navarro. A Texan historian named James Wilson once wrote that Navarro's name is virtually alone in Texas school children and for the most part unknown for the teacher's as well. I believe that Professor Wilson is correct in his assessment in this lack of knowledge and disgrace in which we have engulfed and in some of us here still lives. The year 2005, marked the 150 year anniversary of my father Manuel Guzman Hinojosa and "The Campacuaz" ranch, three miles north of Mercedes. His father was owning (?) the ranch, while it was his father's father. My mother arrived in the Valley at the age of 16 in the year 1887 and was one of the best annual

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\* What follows is a typed version of two recorded presentations given by Rolando Hinojosa Smith at the University of Texas-Pan American on October 3, 2005. Some of his words are not identifiable because of the quality of the sound. I have added a question mark or an elipsis for those cases.

American ... that passed by the Mid-Valley by Jim Wells. One of the early developments (?) of the north in the Rio Grande as you already know that Jim Wells is common in South Texas, is Mexico.

One of the early stories that I wrote about Grandfather Smith was a supposed conversation that he had with Gregorio Morales (?). The life here in the Valley with no air conditioning in 1887. Wells was talking about it and said that all that was needed was a little life and a few drippings (?) and my grandfather replied, "Well that's all that the hell needs too." The story is ... and it has to be but living in the Valley and being born here and getting strait the story have laid the foundation that give me a sense of place and by that I don't mean that I have a fear for the place, not at all, I have a sense of it and by that I mean that I was learning about the Valley about the culture of the Valley, but I was living in it, I was forming part in the industrial pot. The place is really that until it is occupied and once occupied, the history of the place and its people begin. For me, history began in 1748, when the first colonist began moving to the south and the northern banks of the Río Grande. The Río Grande did not get a jurisdiction of everything and it was not years until it was hundreds years later but by then borderlands had gained its own district, its own culture and its own sense of place. It was called "Nuevo Santander" in the Spanish peninsular. The last names were similar up and down in both banks of the river and the second and the third cousins were allowed to marry. This protocol congregated and populated the relationships in the sense of revolving the ... he called them hell Mexicans who played with my interiors of Mexico, had fuereños, foreigners, invaders and what he called the people from the north instead of coming to the war. In other words, the foreigner and nothing else, han sobrevivido themselves como un héroe. For me, having the sense of the war, the sharing of names, of places, of a common history and of an alliance to a place, while it's an achievement preserved through monuments or even cemeteries that holds our names with corresponding achievements.

From my first job ... engaged in what I call "Empapado," which translates as "drenched, combined or soaked," I had to give up the romanticism and the sentimentalism within the line of the beginning writer that get in the way of truth. It's a slumber privilege when I said that romanticism and sentimentalism tend to corrupt. The border was in paradise and it didn't have to be but it was more than paradise, it was home and it was just across. Home and I had to go there. It was a place where I had to take you in and the border was home. There was also a home...elected by uninformed citizens, a home for ... and small time smuggling in a way of life but it also maintained the remains of the social democracy that cried out for independence, the desire to be left alone and to continue with the descends of community. All of these of what you have been learning about in the first place, it was home and in some of the cases, it was ruled by originals colonials in 1727. Followed by a generation of grace, where the music was written and composed by Valley people, from who we learned the ballad of the border. There were two native people and one was Juan Nepomuceno Cortina in the nineteen century. There were stories of the Texas rangers in that century. Another ranger story and that deal with Jacinto Treviño, Aniceto Quezada, the

seditions of 1950 that were held in Mercedes, a place where my father would take me and these are stories that have been transmitted through generations. These are writings that would involve El Valle en Mercedes and there were stories of the revolution of 1910 and the resisting that lasted 10 years by Valley-Mexicanos who fought along both sides of the border and these stories told to me to those of my generation by exile men, women of Mexico who were living by teaching us school, by any who knew Spanish in the northern bank while they buy their return to Mexico. But for those whose didn't return to Mexico, we didn't have the rewarding through the living in a place where conflict occurred with another country and this we had to summit further on and we didn't know to whom we owed our obedience and whom we resented. The lighting to this is unifying and it showed elements that make it a sense of place. The lighting of the border is a version of the Spanish language around Mexico. A language is full of many grammatical occurrences that are no longer used in the Spanish Peninsula but which existed here in the Valley and the more of the diversity of employed language stiffed the resistance to maintain and to nurture the northern bank and the uninformed to disgrace the new system. Now as a border, the north bank of Mexican cruised the defeat to form popular trade go back to where it came from.

The border crossing was there and it has been there before the defeat from the north came while the indigenous population prior to the 1727, 28 and 29, since the Nuevo Santander was never part of the pacific system as it has no recognitions that trap the stultified the indigenous people that remained here in times set down by the bizarre colonial population and that's grace problem that where in Mexico to go back to where it come from was what we call "analogous." So for a writer this one a sense of place is not a bad place to begin and to became essential and so much I had say that my stories are not held together by the blab as much as what the people say and obviously with all the odd stories. What I said here is not to be taken to me that it is impossible for a writer to lie about a place, its history, and its people that the writer is not at a particular place, it can be done and it has been done so what I am saying is that I needed a sense of place and if there is help, go in to where it helps to irrelative your mind, now live and a holy professor at the University of Texas, Américo Paredes. His career that I am not speaking by the form of knowledge nor is it by intention to denigrate all this...I consider a form of knowledge Américo Paredes that I speak of something else being over and over this, it's expressional because I found that after many years of being hesitant, many years of writing and fits and search and getting over and getting false starts, the despite education that I had acquired, I was still getting it, but whenever I intended to write and it did turn false and prayed (?) it and did all that thinking some writers said to drive away but the truth was that I did not know where to begin and there I was again with the "where." Then, I decided to write whatever it was at first in Spanish and then I decided to say on the border in Spanish. I refused to write in English because that's if it is as if to that but all in this upper competitive one side of telling Texas history but with the Spanish speaking relief for societies Spanish language work well and then it was with the natural order of things that English made its entrance when the characters either straight or form themselves in Anglo institutions. In cases where

both cultures got into contact, both languages were used and it didn't matter what they believed in, but what dominated them was the place.

Later on I discovered that generational and class differences also dictated not only uses but what languages as well for this gave me as I always said "what" ... so there is a sense of go, ... there is a sense of go still welcoming to show demonstrations: characteristics, view points, decisions, the Valley and the Border, and history and the people. The people, who do this, also let me to use the folklore and I feel free to use all the literary devices that I wanted to use. I used dialogue, duologues, monologue, imaginary states of preference and whatever place that I wanted to use and it was the Valley and it remained forever Texas. At the same time, I proceeded to write, I saw the border and I drew a map and this clue was another key and this lead to more the Valley, to more characters in the Valley. It was a matter of love for someone else as I had said, but mostly to the proper that came along and it looked like I have been here for some reason but I had no idea and I was not able to see it at that time. At that time, I did not have a sense of place; because I had left it in the military service to form a university training that proceeded on how to get a job, only through terms off in my life, how much I valued and decisions but as I see it this are matters that are implicated by law and values and by our consciousness –if they are wrong- and they usually teach us the entrance about our own society and it is another way of saying one's place of origin.

Genetic structure may enter into the whole point of certain values and perhaps in the matters of the 1860's drew a line. Ortega y Gasset among others, I suspect draw a path that designated everything and the false exception to me and to you more seriously to live and to even form decisions at that time presented is a preparatory stage for me to convert as to when is it my decision to write? Why the Valley? And especially the lightning of the ideas is not base in anything other than the desire to write about what I know, the place I know, the language that was used here, and the Valley. When someone happens to mention other people, I don't write about them, I write about others. Serious writing is an act, is a consequence of arriving at decisions. When one writes, it may be of value or not but I believe that once dedicated to history is the first step that will fix things and give you a sense of place, while that place is a world area or a small home which is the Valley and which is small. Thank, you (Claps from audience).

I think that we still have some time for questions, if you have any or comments, I will be more than happy to entertain you. I want to keep your attention and I see what I can do. The next thing that I am going to read is also set up in the Valley and it is called "The gulf walking (?) center cross." You must be interested to know that writers publish wherever they are asked to write. As someone told me many years back, in a magazine called *Spirit* which was published by a Southwester native, they asked me to write some pieces for them and this is one of the ones and it is called, "The gulf walking (?) center cross." By the time the Japanese have entered the forces in deep and with operations to the peninsula and with preparations to the sea were also in the way. One of the defenders was Clemente Garcia, a twenty-two years old native from Mercedes.

He was not born in Mercedes, but in Northern Mexico. His mother took all his brothers and sister and crossed the Rio Grande of the Rio Bravo Tamaulipas and set up in Mercedes, two or three years after the death of Don Clemente sr. He was the victim of the Spanish influenza of the 1920's. Don Clemente was a veteran of the Mexican revolution upon his death; since he was an investing career man his family began to receive a small patronage from the Mexican government. Mrs. Garcia decision to cross the Rio Grande was for economical reasons. The cross to Mercedes was not accident for her, getting a raid from Mexican nationals help her made it half way before they all spread all over Texas and the Midwest of the United States. Of the many Garcia's, these set in Mercedes. Clemente well advised enrolled in the all Mexican-Texas heroes and he served the mandatory six years and in the late 60's he learned to read and write enough English. Clemente was happy to live in the northern area of the Rio Grande Valley; his ancestors had lived in the Southern Mexico and had dealt with the confirmation of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. (Start reading from the short story and at the end, claps from the audience). Now, I am going to read like for about two minutes, something in Spanish which is titled it "Es el agua" and it is a Spanish monologue:

"Me llamo ... Alaniz García y así me bautizaron en las tierras de los Buenrostro por ser el día de mi santo, el día 21 de enero. En ingles según mi nieta Lucia mi nombre significa...es decir productivo...por mi parte me parece que eso encaja bien a bien ya que aquel que asi se llama se le ha predestinado a producir la tierra (*HS continues with the short story reading*)

This is a brief thing on my father. At one time in his youth and years before I was born, my father was an antirevolutionary. He gave up himself, all his time and much of his time to earn money to support the Mexican Revolution as well as to support any immigrant from all stations that came to the United States. As I mentioned earlier, I did not know about the place because I wasn't even born. In fact, I didn't know what my father had done...A lot of his earnings and his savings were put out to the revolutionaries, which he considered less fortunate...A year before my father died, a man came to our home and asked for permission to see my father. A man with a hat approached my father's bed and offered his hand. We were all standing there watching...My father was also a policeman...He always taught us to show reflection and we also talked about our mother, who never stood in his way. A strong resolute woman, my mother always showed love and respect, which was something pretty much part of our lives...now; it is a little ahead... I found it that I had a happy childhood... (*claps from the audience*). Thanks, thank you.

I'll be very happy to entertain questions if any have questions about the writings or anything that you would like to ask...Thank you all for showing up, but if you have any don't hesitate. I know that it is embarrassing and I know that it is very difficult for you to ask a questions but this is why I am here. But if you don't and want to sit there and visit for another hour, that's fine. (*Laughs from the audience*) How much time do we have left? This is another piece that I wrote for the *Southwest Spirit*, one nice thing about writing is that when you are on assignment, the type of contract that I mentioned earlier is that before a story is

print is that they send you a check and it gets on time. This is call and I didn't have a title but the editor, a woman and I told her that I didn't have a title and that it was about my dad and she said, "I will pick the title" and she did and titled it "Remembrance of my father." He wore a tie and shaved everyday of the week, except Sunday...*(continued with the reading and at the end claps from the audience)*. Thank you. I am so waiting for questions from some brave souls. There is a brave soul.

**Q1:** In your book...

**RH:** You have to speak louder

**Q1:** In your book the Valley, at the beginning you have

**RH:** I have what?

**Q1:** You have this how much of your writing is fiction and how much is not fiction and why did you use fictional names for places that dealt with the Valley?

**RH:** I will answer the last one first. If I were to use real names like San Juan, Alamo, Mercedes, etc. that will restrict the writer. I will have to write what? When? and why? But if I use fictional names instead of using San Juan, Mercedes, La Joya or anything, this give the writer more freedom. Now going back to the first question; how was the first question?

**Q1:** How much of your writing is fictional

**RH:** Ah! I would say it maybe sixty and forty and some stories even seventy and thirty and others sometimes fifty-fifty. I am not here to report, so I have to use my imagination. I am not alone, every writer does that. The point is to write about what you know but make sure that you know how to write it, so in that case you will become a good writer. Thank you.

**Q2:** Can I ask you in Spanish?

**RH:** Of course

**Q2:** ¿Cuándo le encargan un trabajo, le dan algunas guías y si no es así, cómo escoge usted sus temas?

**RH:** Bien. Cuando se me pide que escriba algo tiene que ser por comisión, este que si yo escojo el tema o si ellos lo escogen o si ellos dan ciertas reglas, estos términos lo que sea. Yo escojo lo que yo quiero escribir. Lo único que yo hago son dos preguntas: Cuando lo quieren, cuando se requiere y cuantas palabras Si quieren 1200 palabras bien y además ellos ya saben lo que yo voy a escribir. Le dan a uno todo tipo de libertad de escribir aunque ellos paguen, no. Espero que eso le contestare su pregunta señorita.

**Q2:** Claro, gracias

**Q3:** Yo le quería pedir de favor si pudiera aconsejar a estos alumnos o hablarles un poco de lo que piensa que es un sueño inalcanzable, poder escribir algún día, algunos de mis alumnos compartieron eso conmigo. Podría ser tan amable de decirles que se podría convertir en realidad o algunos consejos. En inglés por favor.

**RH:** O una mezclanza de los dos

**Q3:** O una mezclanza estaría bien.

**RH:** My parents contributed a lot and I thought that everybody read, well I was wrong, so I was very fortunately that my brothers and sister and myself had that

opportunity. I wrote my first story when I was fifteen years old about two campesinos who just walked through the Mexican revolution. One of them was killed...the next thing that I wrote was when I was in High School and I went to the library and it was a story against smoking. I was about sixteen years old and smoked. (*Laughs from the audience*). All of a sudden, I started to write about the Mexican American movement. But, you must be a reader first. All writers that I know have always been readers and then, if you dislike reading then forget about being a writer (*laughs*). Imagination won't take you very long believe me. Imagination gets to fly after a while and you have to be a good listener. Experience in life shows you of social classes. The other piece of advice that I give my students at the University of Texas that are enrolled in creative writing is that if you write people don't care, if you stop writing people won't care. The only one that cares is you, the writer, and is only you who have to believe in yourself. Don't show your stories to your mom or dad or friends, show them to a professor or some older woman or man who has been a reader, distinguished in stories.

### **Second presentation**

**Q1:** People define the concept of the "frontier" in many ways, but you Dr. Hinojosa, how would you define it?

**RH:** La frontera es una división entre dos países ligados psicológicamente, lingüísticamente, comercialmente, históricamente. Una semejanza de ver el mundo, cosas afines, psicología, valores, etc.

**Q2:** ¿Qué significa para usted la novela *Estampas del Valle*?

**RH:** Empezó con esta novela una serie conocida como de *Klail City Death Tramps*

**Q3:** ¿Ese punto escondido usted le ve futuro?

**RH:** Escribo de este lugar, El Valle ya que nací y viví en el Valle. Pero un escritor no puede escribir la misma novela siempre, sólo una vez.

**Q4:** ¿Recibió críticas negativas por haber escrito esa novela?

**RH:** Una gama nada más ahora, ¿Qué va a pasar cuando muera el presidente? ¿Cómo va a venir el futuro? ¿Quién nos va asistir en un cambio? Y es la novedad académica de campo. Cuando acabe con ese cuento de Fernar (?), por que si yo escribo una novela, necesitaría más tiempo y más espacio que lo que requiere un cuento. Y ahora cuando no escribo, leo o me paso visitando mis clases y universidades y tengo a amigos míos, a los que aprecio. Podría escribir muchas historias de cosas que veo, pero ahora si debo de escribir eso, discúlpeme pero debo de hacer muchas notas. Ya descansaron y las preguntas.

**Q5:** Otra, otra.

**RH:** Claro que sí, son muy gratas.

**Q6:** Volviendo a lo de los personajes Dr. Hinojosa, ¿hay alguna anécdota o alguna razón por la que usted haya escogido el nombre de sus personajes narradores, Rafa Malacara y Rafa Buenrostro?

**RH:** Hay familia Malacara en Mercedes y otra familia que se llama Buenrostro, a mí siempre me han gustado esos nombres. Ahora ¿Quiénes son de Reynosa? Y no soy de la migra, eh (*risas*). Todos y usted también señorita si se fijan en la

telefónica del Valle, no, que ahora todavía influye, hay dos tribus en Reynosa con el interesante para mí apellido de Centeno y uno es Buenrostro y el otro es Malacara (*risas*) no, ríanse que no es sólo una ficción. Se tienen que fijar por los Centeno, uno Malacara y otro Buenrostro. Pero Malacara también es el apellido de un amigo mío, yo cuando me quedaba en la casa del abuelo de la doctora Contreras allá en la ciudad de Coahuila una población de mil doscientas almas en aquel tiempo y que ahora hasta universidad tienen. Teníamos un farmacéutico en la casa que tenía en la entrada de la puerta, pues su farmacia y debajo decía “Ejerce sin título” (*risas*). Al cruzar la calle estaba la Misión, una iglesia pero no había cura, el párroco venía dos veces al mes o a bautizar u otros eventos y allí era donde pasaba los veranos y para mí era una gran cosa, salía del Valle y Arteaga está más alto que Saltillo entonces yo salía de esa caldera fue durante la guerra mundial número dos y esa fue parte también de mi educación informal. Pero también iba al puente (?) de la central no de Monterrey sino de Arteaga, es un pueblo que estaba allí y se llamaba Bellaniote, desapareció y se acabó el chorro de agua y la fábrica de textiles se cerró y el pueblo se acabó... Por allí pasaba yo cuando iba, por Mendoza y me salía del camino y por allí tenía este gran amigo mío que se llamaba, que se llama por que todavía está vivo Geracio, lindo nombre (*risas*), es un nombre que ya no se oye, Malacara y el padre era médico de la región quien era un gran amigo y era un gran escritor. Los nombres surgen donde quiera pero tienen que ser de la región y antes de venir para acá hablaba con alguien allí, de que yo tengo un apellido que es vasco y aquí hay vascos Aguirre, Izaguirre, Guerra también pero ese nombre es muy vasco y es “Archuleta” y parece en una de las novelas y suena como que no es del Valle. Son gratis las preguntas (*risas*), a no ser de que ya se me hayan fastidiado.

**Q7:** No, no hay nada de eso profe.

**RH:** Pues muy agradecido el día de hoy.

**Q8:** ¿Por qué cree usted que Gloria Anzaldúa no haya sido reconocida aquí en el Valle?

**RH:** Por que no veía mucho al Valle Gloria. Las memorias de Gloria en el Valle eran de su tiempo y no había progreso del Valle en ese tiempo. Además la gente del Valle no lee, ustedes leen por que son estudiantes pero la mayoría del mundo norteamericano tampoco lee, a no ser que sea algo fácil. Aunque ella es bastante conocida en el mundo hispano. Pero ella no sabía que el Valle había cambiado mucho. Las principales instituciones, las aulas donde se estudia, toda profesión que tomemos, la profesión libre, imitador, inédito, deportistas, etc. Ella todavía estaba viviendo en aquellos tiempos y eso no tiene que ver nada que no se le conozca es que ella todavía estaba allí, es como si yo escribiera *Estampas del Valle* hace dieciocho meses. Pero es un libro muy interesante, muy atrevida en mezclar todo tipo de género que este a su alcance o este al alcance de su persona. Lo que es el Valle ahora ha de tener casi como un millón de habitantes de este lado solamente pero vale la pena el avance. Lo que he dicho es una opinión que comparto con muchos, es algo muy universal.

**Q9:** Mi pregunta esta relacionada con la que hizo Chema, cuando a tí te viene la musa, la inquietud por escribir, el deseo, la necesidad de escribir; ¿Cómo te



viene ese deseo? ¿Te viene, piensas en un ambiente en el que va a desarrollar, piensas en un personaje que ya lo tienes semicreado y se va desarrollando la narración ¡ah! piensas en un incidente en el cual hay memorias personales y ambientes? ¿Cómo?

**RH:** Todas esas cosas. Pienso en alguien o en algunas áreas, pienso en las localidades de aquí, en el ambiente tanto socioeconómico como social, en la gente trabajadora me viene una idea que es ese cambio de opinión. Es algo raro esto de escribir por que uno tiene una idea y ese es el punto y de repente ve que uno ya no va mas allá, por que ya se le acabó la pólvora, es algo quizás como un zigzag. Pero yo también quisiera saber muchas veces pero ni me pregunto esa pregunta, entonces creo que tengo una manera de escribir y por eso me siento con gran suerte cuando algo se me ocurre y empiezo. Ejemplo más cercano es esa novela que me pidió Fernando Martínez pensé en un ex-policía de homicidio, se jubiló como teniente, no podía ascender más por que era demasiado aprovechado y no podía ascender como le había pronosticado un padrino italiano y Kiko se jubila y estoy pensando todo esto, no lo he escrito, bueno ya lo escribí y empiezo como empiezan todos los escritores ¿Qué pasaría si? O como se dice What would happend if? Como contexto se jubila y se hace matón por contrato. Estaba en ese tren de la legalidad y ahora se va a convertir en un matón por pago. Lo que él tiene, tiene un departamento y saluda cada tres o cuatro meses y tiene una caja casi llena de teléfonos celulares y lo llaman una vez o él llama una vez y si quieren algo ponen un aviso en el periódico y él los contacta. Se llama “Los siete contratos de Ramson (?)” Por que una vez yo llamaba a la mujer que fue mi esposa cuando era estudiante y la llame a Detroit y marqué mal el número y contestó un señor y me di cuenta de mi error y le dije:

- “perdone” y todo ese mugrero. “Excuse me, what specific number did I dialed?” Me dio el número y le dije “oh!, I am very sorry to bother you, sir.” Entonces le pregunte, Who are you?
- Oh, my name is Ramson o Renson.

Pero me cayó también y me dije “a ver si algún día uso el nombre y el apellido de este señor” y de allí me vino y eso fue, ¡ah! nos casamos en el 63 entonces eso debió de ser en el 62, entonces me acordé de ese nombre y ese nombre tocó otra cosa y otra cosa y otra cosa y otra cosa. Por decirlo así y en este contrato mata a seis personas pero el séptimo y el último crimen que comete, mata a alguien, otro italiano y lleva cuatro billetes o como decimos boletos de avión de distintas compañías y cuatro ciudades diferentes; Denver, Chatanuga, Atlanta y el último que abre es a San José, Costa Rica. Cómo me vino la idea no sé y ahora de convertirse en policía a malhechor, no se, eso es otra cosa.

No yo me tengo que ir a Austin si no es mucha molestia (*risas*) me voy por avión, ya me voy (*aplausos*).