

Helmbrecht Breinig and Barbara Buchenau:

“Emptied Grounds: Mutual Mappings in the Americas”

Abstract

The paper investigates the role of mental mapping in the construction of national identity and alterity in an inter-American context. The imaginary and discursive construction of space is analyzed as it occurs in literary texts and cultural criticism by late 20th-century authors and scholars from Canada, the United States and Latin America. Spatial metaphors and images are discussed under key aspects like the directionality in mapping, its correlation to perception and power, the utopic or dystopic capacity of most mental mappings and their capacity to reessentializing constructivist difference but also to reconceptualize seemingly stable demarcated spaces into interstitial sites breeding transdifference. Our focus will be on spaces characterized by seeming emptiness or efforts to arrive at such an unlikely state.