Prof. Scanlan’s Definition of Homesickness

Fall 2015

Homesickness is a feeling of missing some aspect of a home that is no longer available; such an aspect of home may be a previous home, the memory of having fewer responsibilities as a child, or being close to an extended set of family members. More specifically, homesickness may be an idealization of the past, and it may be individual or collective. But it can also be a Janus-faced feeling for a past home, a feeling in which a homesick person perceives the old home negatively, the result of which is that he or she may reconfigure the idea of home and seek a different, future home. One feels homesick due to comparison and recognition; the self, in the act of remembering the past home, collides with that remembered older self, and the recognition of the difference circulates with the present moment, leading to a type of shock that points that person’s attention in three directions at once: back to the past, into the present moment, and into the future. In sum, homesickness is complex and historically embedded; it recruits memory, environment, and experience to aid a person in making decisions about the present and future.

Sources:

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia* (2001).

Casey, Edward. *The Fate of Place: A Philosphical History* (1998).

Matt, Susan J. *Homesickness: A History* (2011)

Ritivoi, Andreea. *Yesterday’s Self: Nostalgia and the Immigrant Identity* (2002).

Scanlan, Sean “Global and Radical Homesickness: Rewriting Identities in Airport

Homes,” under review at *ariel: A Review of International English Literature*