Response 3

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Homi K. Bhabha: The Location of Culture.

Bhabha has been accused of being wordy and using too much jargon. He has been accused of not having a point. When I first started reading DissemiNation, I was beginning to side with those criticisms. The language is bulky and the sentences are very long; however, once I read the excerpt the 5th time, it started to become clearer and I could see the points Bhabha was so passionate about. I realized that a big reason it was difficult to get though was that Bhabha has a vast knowledge of creative literary works, theory, journals, etc. He uses many examples from a variety of writing forms to support his argument that we are a split nation which represents ourselves with both the rhetorical pedagogy of the past and the true reality of the present.

He emphasizes that applying ambivalence to our culture dulls the diversity and doesn’t accurately represent all of our differences. We cannot just have one general notion of one certain culture because there are different types of people within each culture. He uses a quote from Benedict Anderson to help the reader understand that part of the “split nation” has to do with the representation of the culture of the young vs. the representation of the culture of the old: “But why do nations celebrate their hoariness, not their astonishing youth?”

As a nation, we cannot look to the past to derive the definition of our present culture, yet the past is the only resource we have if we continue to be ambivalent about the reality of our current representation. It is interesting that he points out that we metaphorically associate landscape as the distinctive quality of our national identity. This is interesting because people seemingly associate the American frontier with cowboys, but not everyone who lives in America can be filed under this category. Also, there are not only different cultures within the American culture; but there are different types of people within each culture in America. Attempting to understand and accurately represent an entire culture means we have to play active roles in articulating (and I think celebrating) our differences. This is shaky territory for some because in America’s history, the majority has consistently discriminated against anyone who was different. Celebrating differences seems to be taboo, but to move on and evolve cognitively, we must shed the past .