

The 'Heritage Minutes' and Canadian collective memory: An
analysis of the use of nostalgia and nationalism to build a unifying
cultural memory

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Abstract

Since its beginnings as a nation, Canada has been a country characterized by plurality, regionalism and internal differences. It struggles in search of a unifying national identity and self-definition. Owing to its multicultural status, proximity to the United States, the vastness of its territory, its colonial past and its high immigration levels, Canada endures an on-going identity crisis. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the political and cultural elite in Canada became preoccupied with this identity crisis. In 1991, the privately owned Charles R. Bronfman Foundation initiated a series of television vignettes called the 'Heritage Minutes'. These spots were intended to encourage Canadian collective cultural memory and help to build a unifying Canadian national identity. This dissertation examines the 'Heritage Minutes' as examples of how the nation's past can be used as a resource to aid in the formation of collective national memories and create a sense of national unity and identity within Canada.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=ngc>. Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission. JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. The solution to this problem is offered by cultural memory, a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behavior and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that obtains through generations in repeated societal practice and initiation. This paper examines the ties between cultural heritage and nationalism. It offers an historical account of such relationships and presents examples from recent times. Cultural heritage is one arena where such themes and questions remain intriguing, and where evidence can be cited to support or dispute each of the positions held above. From the many aspects of cultural heritage, both intangible and tangible, that could be explored in relation to these questions, this paper focuses its attention on the built environment, and in particular the ways in which "classical" architecture and the notion of "antiquity" have figured in the making of nations. The "survival of the type" in the sense of a cultural problem and program. In the third decade of this century, the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and the art historian Aby Warburg independently developed two theories of a "collective" or "social memory." Their otherwise fundamentally different approaches meet in a decisive dismissal of numerous turn-of-the-century attempts to conceive collective memory in biological terms as an inheritable or "racial memory," a tendency which would still obtain, for instance, in C. G. Jung's theory of archetypes. Expand. View via Publisher. bisla.sk. Save to Library. Create Alert. Cite.

The topic of cultural memory arose from a study group engaged on the *Archaologie der literarischen Kommunikation*, documented in *Schrift und Gedächtnis [Writing and Memory]* (1983), *Kanon und Zensur [Canon and Censorship]* (1987) and *Weisheit [Wisdom]* (1991), and further developed at various conferences and lectures.¹ This book is the direct result of preparations for and evaluations of the past and identity were the two focal points around which we tried to build our concept of cultural memory. My task was to deal with the ancient world whereas Aleidas was to pursue the topic up to modernity and postmodernism. However, due to external reasons, the work that was planned as a common enterprise was published separately at seven years distance.