The Canadian Dream-Work: History, Myth and Nostalgia in the Heritage Minutes

by

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the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

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the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

Recently, lamentations over the so-called 'death of Canadian history' have been voiced from many quarters in Canadian civic culture. The consequence of this creeping national amnesia, its mourners tell us, will be a further fragmentation of the Canadian body politic and an ineluctable drift into continentalism. However, this lamentation is then generally followed by the assertion if we act quickly and resolutely to revive national memory, Canada will once again be a united and independent nation.

This thesis will begin critically interrogating this discourse of the Canadian memory crisis by examining the relationship between history, nostalgia and myth. It will then situate this discourse in its historical context by tracing the relationship between the discourse of cultural nationalism, the historical profession, the writing of national history and the rise of the Canadian nation-state since the late 19th century. Finally, it will examine in depth perhaps the most publicly prominent product of the most recent iteration of this discourse—the Heritage Minutes—and assess whose view of the Canadian past *and* future they celebrate and the possible political and moral consequences of this selective memory.

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Introduction: The Nostalgic Vision of Damon Ira Chance

When we first meet Harry Vincent, the narrator of Guy Vanderhaeghe's 1996 novel The Englishman's Boy, he directs our 'gaze' out the window of his film lot office and observes that

History is calling it a day. Roman legionaries tramp the street accompanied by Joseph and Mary, while a hired nurse in cap and uniform totes the Baby Jesus. Ladies-in-waiting from the court of the Virgin Queen trail the Holy Family, tits cinched flat under Elizabethan bodices sheer as the face of a cliff. A flock of parrot-plumed Aztecs are hard on their heels. Last of all, three frostbitten veterans of the Valley Forge drag flintlocks on the asphalt roadway (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 5).

In this passage, the problem of collective memory in the age of electronic reproduction is stated with grace and economy. As the ability to seemingly recreate/simulate the past increases and as more and more narratives of the past demand entry into the 'collective memory', our capacity to distinguish between the past and the present and to situate our ancestors in their 'appropriate' periods and places seems to wane. For many observers, the result of this overproduction of narratives and helter-skelter commingling of 'pasts' is that our contemporary sense of history has indeed "called it a day".

It is against this background of our apparent increased difficulty to distinguish 'authentic' experience of the past from what Fredric Jameson has described as the "pop images of the past" (Jameson, 2001) that the drama of The Englishman's Boy plays out. In the novel, the narrator Harry Vincent feels the pull of two different understandings of the past. The first comes from his boss Damon Ira Chance, an eccentric and reclusive millionaire who came to Hollywood in the 1920s to make what he describes as "American movies... pictures rooted in American history and American history" (Vanderhaeghe,

1997: 16). When we are first introduced to Chance, he is sitting in the library of his otherwise empty *faux* Tudor mansion. In that meeting, Chance tells Harry that he was inspired to enter the business of producing films by D.W. Griffith whose films such as *Birth of a Nation*, he asserts, “filled America’s spiritual emptiness *with* a vision of itself” (Vanderhaeghe 1997: 18). Griffith, he explains later in the book, was “the Great Educator” because he had tapped into a pedagogical medium without rival: film. As Chance expatiates, with *Birth of a Nation*, “The movie theatre became the biggest night school any teacher had ever dreamed of; one big classroom stretching from Maine to California... Whatever bits of history the average American knows, he’s learned from Griffith” (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 107).

Chance reveals that his ambition is to carry on Griffith’s work of creating ‘a vision of itself’ for America. Like Griffith who employed historians and archaeologists to ensure that his productions were ‘historically accurate’, Chance insists on the importance of ‘the facts’. Facts, he tells Harry, “are the bread America wants to eat” (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 19). However, having made this declaration of empiricist faith, Chance is then quick to backtrack. He argues that while they are important, the facts in film making must be “shaped by intuition”. When Harry presses him to elaborate, Chance explains that he believes that while the role of the intellect is to discern ‘facts’ in the external world, its power does not extend to the ‘inner world’. In order to understand the latter, Chance argues, we need intuition because it “has its roots in our deepest being, a being we are scarcely aware of... My intuition, my will is the clue to my hidden self” (ibid.). As he continues to elaborate on this, it becomes quite clear why he has chosen film as his

medium. Film, he asserts, appeals to our deepest unconscious longings and draws on a reservoir of atavistic images and symbols to write 'history by lightning'. As he explains, the ability to muster images in the service of a political project is the key to power in the age of mass politics and he lavishly praises Mussolini's ability to appeal to the intuitive part of our psyche by orchestrating "a stream more potent than artillery manned by men without spiritual convictions" (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 109).

In the novel, the apparent contradiction within Chance's distinction between "the facts" and "intuition" serves as a recurrent source of tension between himself, Harry and the literary embodiment of the competing vision of the past: Shorty McAdoo. McAdoo appears in the novel as a former cowboy who, like many other former cowboys, now hangs around Hollywood backlots in hopes of being hired as an extra or a stunt double in a Hollywood western. Chance has heard that he is one of the last cowboys alive who can recount a real "cowboy-and-Indian" story that could serve as the basis of his project of writing American "history by lightning" and he hires Harry to track McAdoo down in order to buy his story. When Harry first finds him and offers to pay him to tell his story, McAdoo initially refuses by telling him that "I ain't interested in all that dead shit. I know the truth" (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 85). Harry then tries to persuade him by telling him that his story has historical value, McAdoo gives his assessment of stories that have been endowed with so-called "historical value": put simply, they are "lies". As he explains later, Chance does not want the truth because "It ain't to his taste" (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 202).

Harry, however, perseveres and convinces Shorty to, in McAdoo's words, "fatten up on the dead" by selling his story. Shorty goes on to narrate the story of the events

leading up, including and immediately following what has come to be known as the Cypress Hills Massacre. This was a massacre of thirty-six Assiniboine (including the elderly, women and children) in the Cypress Hills in southern Saskatchewan in 1873 by a band of drunk American wolf-hunters in retaliation for an alleged horse theft. McAdoo was a member of the wolf-hunting band and, as he details, this horror of this initial crime was added by the wolfers' subsequent mutilation of the corpses of the dead and the gang rape of a girl who was, at most, fourteen years old by the rest of the wolfers. Furthermore, once the other men had done brutalizing the child, they killed her by burning down the trading post in which they had locked her.

When Harry presents Chance with this final episode of the gang rape and incineration of the girl in the form of a film script, his simmering unease about Chance and what he means by 'intuition' begins to boil over. Chance tells him that the ending is "dreadful" because it "misses the point entirely" and he contents himself simply narrating 'the facts' as McAdoo related them. More specifically, he charges that Harry has "the psychology" of the girl all wrong because he was not relying on his 'intuition'. According to Chance, while 'the facts' might put the tinderbox in the hands of the wolfers, 'intuition' puts it in her hands. That is because she is possessed by the "psychology of the defeated". As Chance explains: "The sick hate the healthy. The defeated hate the victor. The inferior *always* resent the superior. They sicken with resentment, they brood, fantasize revenge, plot. They attempt to turn everything on its head; they try to impose feelings of guilt on the healthy and the strong" (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 251).

This Nietzschean/fascist polemic (in the same scene, he goes on to lavishly praise the likes of Mussolini and blames Jews and Bolsheviks for America's current spiritual weakness) is then followed by a note of optimism: "our film will not fall into that trap. Our film will be a celebration of spiritual and physical strength" (ibid.). By reviving the merciless past, he argues, America will have the spiritual strength to be merciless with its internal and external enemies in the future. According to Chance, the 'facts' of Shorty's story are valuable only insofar as they can be transformed into what Georg Sorel (whose Reflections on Violence (1925) he gives Harry to read) calls a social myth. As another character explains to Harry at one point, Sorel believed that "the myth doesn't need to have any grounds in reality, or have any possibility of being accomplished; it's there to motivate people, provide the impetus for violent action" (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 270).

Soon after listening to Chance's jeremiad, Harry quits on the grounds that he cannot betray Shorty and himself any further by participating in Chance's project. However, when he next encounters Shorty, the latter tells him that he feels that a double victimization has taken place. First of all, his own identity has been taken from him. He tells Harry how he tried to give Chance back the money he was paid for his story in order to stop the film from being made but Chance refused to speak to him. Furthermore, Chance spread the story that Shorty is dead. This theft of his identity, however, is secondary in Shorty's mind to an even more serious crime: the desecration of the memory of the girl. He tells Harry that while he can live with what Chance has done to him, "I got no right to sell the girl if he ain't going to do right by her" (Vanderhaeghe, 1997: 278). He, on the other hand, will do right by her and vows that "I ain't going to rest until I've

tried. I wouldn't have talked to you but you promised the truth would be proclaimed" (ibid.). In the ending scene of the novel, McAdoo confronts Chance on the street after the première of Chance's movie and a scuffle ensues that leaves Chance dead. In the end, the repressed past returns to destroy the mythmaker.

I have lingered at length on The Englishman's Boy because its plot dramatizes many of the themes and issues with which this thesis will be concerned. In this thesis, I will be critically examining another attempt to write "history by lightning": the Heritage Minutes. These are a collection of 60+ sixty-second historical vignettes that seek to dramatize various events and personages from the Canadian past and have become a fixture on Canadian television and film screens. While many Canadians assume that these 'mini-documentaries' are created by the Canadian state, they are originally the brainchild of another rich and powerful man: Seagram's chairman Charles Bronfman whose CRB Foundation coordinated and partially funded the production of the Minutes for more than a decade. More recently, Bronfman has been joined in this project of writing Canadian history by lightning by a veritable "who's who" of the Canadian corporate world, and the Heritage Minutes have been drawn into a larger project aimed at 'reviving' Canadian historical consciousness called Historica.

In a self-produced documentary titled Minute by Minute: the Making of a Mythology (1998), we see how the Heritage Project's (the original project out of which the Minutes sprang) self-understanding strongly echoes that of Chance. Like Chance who laments that American spiritual vitality is being eroded by 'the strangers among us' who have no memory of the glorious past, Minute by Minute begins with a series of 'person on

the street' interviews in which respondents proclaim alternatively the dullness of Canadian history or the biased nature of the history they learned in school. One man asserts simply that there is "not much to Canadian history, is there?", while a woman confesses that "I went to a French school and I think that I learned things (pause)...differently" (Heritage Project, 1998). The scene then shifts to a series of interviews with many of the major actors behind the project—Charles Bronfman, journalist and former CBC president Patrick Watson, historian and journalist Laurier Lapierre, political scientist and former Trudeau aide Thomas Axworthy and others who then offer further proof of the national memory crisis. In speaking of Canadian students, Lapierre, for instance, contends that "They think that they have no history, they think they have no roots..." (ibid.). Laurier's assertion of the national memory-crisis is then quickly followed up by Patrick Watson who affirms the project's faith in history by trotting out a familiar commonplace: "The underlying importance of history goes back to the statement of the great philosopher who said 'The man who does not know his history is doomed to repeat it'" (ibid.).

Once the documentary has performed this assertion of the Canadian memory-crisis and given testimony to the providential power of history, it then goes on to discuss more technical questions as to who is to blame for the crisis and how their evil intentions can be countered. In this documentary, four main mnemophages are identified: the parochialism of provincial history textbooks; American popular culture; cultural and linguistic differences within the Canadian body politic; and dull educational materials. As we have seen from the 'woman-on-the-street', this project is predicated on the belief that the provincial control over education (especially in Quebec) has resulted in a fragmentation of

Canadian memory—students are taught a lot about their province but not about Canada as a whole. Furthermore, in the words of Thomas Axworthy, the executive director of Historica, the construction of a Canadian national memory has always had to cope with the fact that “we have trouble telling our own story in our own land and having access to our own imagination just because of the weight of the neighbour beside us” (ibid.). Not only does American culture impede the national diffusion of common memories, Axworthy argues, but so too do linguistic and regional differences: “this is a country full of stories and we don’t know them, We don’t know them because we speak different languages, we don’t know them because we live so far apart” (ibid.). Finally, as the high school teacher Paula Courchêne testifies: “One of the problems with teaching history is very often finding the stimulus that will get them [students] interested and get them to want to learn more...kids tend to find Canadian history boring” (ibid.).

Having identified the source of the problem, we are then offered Historica’s cure for our national ills. Like Chance who seizes on the pedagogical/hortatory potential of the electronic media and the codes of popular culture, this first of all involves the extensive use of the codes of commodity culture to sell Canadians on their past. As Watson puts it: “If we can use 30 second or 1 minute slots on television to persuade people that Corn Flakes or underarm deodorant or Cadillacs are interesting, could we not use the same period on television to persuade Canadians that they have an interesting past?” (ibid.). Secondly, it involves an emphasis on simple, dramatic, formulaic and exemplary stories of reconciliation and overcoming. Like Chance making a distinction between ‘the facts’ and ‘intuition’, Watson, for example, discusses in the documentary how “The most difficult

part was avoiding the temptation to be too informative and to concentrate on being dramatic” and Lapierre asserts that “it’s not a question of teaching history, it’s a question of feeling it...” (ibid.).

As Watson himself admits, this emphasis on ‘intuition’, drama and ‘feeling’ often brought the writers of the Minutes into conflict with the historians who were hired as consultants to the project. When the project first began, he explains, “I sort of thought of them as ‘the Mind Police’” (ibid.). Ironically enough, this is the same role that Hilda Neatby assigned to historians in her discussion of the relationship between Hollywood and the historians in her submission to the 1951 Massey Commission (Neatby, 1951). However, while Neatby hoped that the presence of historians would prevent what she feared to be the licentious commingling of fact and fiction in historical films, Watson betrays no such fears. In a discursive sleight of hand that once again raises the spectre of Chance, he seeks to elude the concerns of Neatby and her ilk by arguing that, counter to all of his previous pronouncements on the sacrosanct nature of history, the Heritage Minutes are not about ‘history’ at all. As he explains: “We’re not really doing documentaries here, we’re making myths. That’s what movies are, they’re myths and this country needs a mythology of its history before it can go and get motivated to go study its documentary history” (ibid.). As Watson puts it (again echoing Chance), the goal of the Minutes is not to inform and educate Canadian citizens but to construct and mobilize Canadian nationalists. Furthermore, Watson implies that once this “national mythology” becomes the filter through which Canadians view their past, the “documentary history” of Canada will be read once again as a grand narrative of overcoming and reconciliation. In

other words, the Minutes will reassert the primacy of the Canadian grand narrative, mobilize Canadian nationalism and inoculate their viewers against competing narratives of the past.

In the last few sequences of the documentary, the hegemonic intentions of this project are made fully manifest. Michael Levine, the executive producer of the Minutes, discusses the difference between this project and other heritage foundations. While the latter tend to be 'right-wing' and 'exclusionary', the Heritage Project/Historica is described as "an inclusionary foundation. Our view is that we want everyone in the country to understand that they have a part and a stake in the country" (ibid.). While such a description of 'inclusionary' sounds very nice, Levine is soon followed by John Thompson, one of the historians who acted as a consultant for the project. In the words of Thompson, this 'inclusiveness' takes on a distinctly Hegelian character in which difference is always 'regressive' and identity is a hallmark of 'progress'. According to Thompson, while the project does accept that Canadians have come into conflict in the past, "it is important that they understand the degree to which those conflicts have in fact been resolved"(ibid.). In the concluding sequence of the documentary, Watson brings together these descriptions of both Heritage Project and Canada's history as 'inclusive' together to sound a 'call to arms' and a warning:

I think that what you do when you're trying to build a sense of nationhood is bring as many of these experiences up to the surface as possible so that people can look around and say "Yes. We all had a part in these stories." That's the point at which the nation is able to say to itself "We are a nation" and that's vital. If you don't have that, it's just going to disintegrate. Which, by the way, we risk doing if we don't do a lot more of this stuff (ibid.)

At this point, the similarities between Chance's project and that of the Heritage Minutes should be clear. Both are attempts to use the screen media and the codes and narratives of popular culture to disseminate a heavily mythologized version of the collective past in hopes of mobilizing nationalism and inoculating their viewers against competing narratives of the past *and* the future. While both claim to rely upon 'the facts' to achieve their projects, both are equally quick to argue that 'the facts' must be shaped by 'intuition'. As Lapierre put it, they are less concerned with informing than motivating. Finally, both believe that such a mobilization is absolutely necessary because both believe that the nation is faced with myriad internal and external threats which conspire to sap its ability to reproduce its 'inner spirit'.

Fundamentally, therefore, both projects are inherently nostalgic. Nostalgia, as I will explain in greater detail in this thesis, is a narrative framework for the construction of the past, present *and* the future, in which the present is figured as a postlapsarian time of deficiency, fragmentation, crisis, decay and danger, while the past is constructed as a golden age of wholeness, vitality, harmony and plenitude. The juxtaposition of a fallen present and a golden past is then used as an exhortation to 'save' the future. In order to prevent the future from falling in line with current tendencies towards decay and disintegration, we must first return to the past, to our roots, to our heritage. Once that heritage is rediscovered, nostalgia assures us, we will regain the blueprints for future greatness. In other words, the future must be secured by first going back to the past.

As we have seen, this nostalgic construction of the past and the present animates both projects we have been discussing in this introduction. Both assert the 'fallenness' of

the present and assert that the future can only be secured by a return to the national past.

Furthermore, as we have seen, this nostalgic construction of the past and the present is linked to a specific political project oriented to the future. Chance's project of writing history by lightning by a nostalgic replay of the myth of 'how the West was won', for example, was directly tied to a distinctly unsavory quasi-fascist political project.

Furthermore, Chance's tailoring of the past to suit that project required a highly selective reading of reported events, the wholesale reconfiguration of others and the addition of events never reported. In other words, the nostalgically inspired political project for the future involves a licentious commingling of memory and desire.

Unlike Chance's overt expression of his fascistic sympathies, the political project that underlies the Heritage Minutes is never fully stated. However, from the comments of the likes of Watson, Levine and Thompson, we can infer that this project is centralizing in its ambition to create a 'national' as opposed to a provincial mythology, that it is hegemonic in its intention to append selected subaltern memories to the national narrative and that it is politically conservative in that it seeks to construct major past social contradictions as having been reconciled in the present. Furthermore, as I will argue in this thesis, there is another political project at work that is rarely voiced in the pious public pronouncements of its architects: corporate Canada's attempt to reconfigure Canadian subjectivities in a manner that suits its own "innovation agenda". In other words, corporate Canada seems to be using the Heritage Minutes and the attending discourse of nation-building that accompanies them as a blind for its own political and cultural project of transforming future Canadian 'citizens' into 'consumers' and 'knowledge workers'.

In what follows, I will try to make this case by occupying a position similar to that of Harry Vincent vis-à-vis Chance and McAdoo. In other words, I will try to mediate between the Heritage Minutes and the deeply nostalgic discourse attending their production and the past whose ‘facts’ the Minutes seek to reconfigure into a ‘dramatic’ form that maximizes their mobilizing power. In order to try to accomplish this goal, I will devote my first two chapters to the investigation of the relationship between history, myth and nostalgia. More specifically, Chapter 1 will be concerned with provisionally answering three basic questions which must be central to any attempt to critique the nostalgic and mythic construction of the past: “how do we talk about the past?”, “why do we talk about the past?” and “how can we distinguish between ‘mythic’ and ‘historical’ stories about the past?”. Chapter 2 will build on this initial discussion of how and why we talk about the past by a detailed discussion of what I will argue is the construction of the past, present and future that structures the texts of the Heritage Minutes as well the discourse surrounding its production: nostalgia. This discussion will take the form of a review of the literature on nostalgia followed by a discussion of its relationship to history and myth. Based on this review, I will then conclude by suggesting a method for the critique of nostalgic texts.

In the next two chapters, I will situate the production of the Heritage Minutes within their historical and social contexts. Chapter 3 will begin with a discussion of the close historical connection between state formation and the rise of nationalism, historicism and the emergence of the historical profession from the late 18th century onward. While my history of that series of relationships will begin in Napoleonic Europe, I then discuss

how the production of national histories was central to the nation-building projects of both French and English Canada from the mid-19th century onwards. Furthermore, I will also trace how from that period into our present, English Canadian nationalist historians and other cultural nationalists have been able to convince state elites of their centrality to the Canadian nation-building project by recurrently deploying what I call the “discourse of the memory-crisis”. This discourse, I will argue, is inherently nostalgic in that it constructs the present as one of amnesia and fragmentation and the future as being in peril unless there is a return to the past. In other words, the discourse of the memory-crisis is a nostalgia for memory.

Chapter 4 begins by examining how the most recent iteration of the discourse of the memory-crisis in popular books such as Jack Granatstein’s Who Killed Canadian History (1998) or John Ralston Saul’s Reflections of a Siamese Twin (1997) and in the pronouncements of prominent public figures like Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and CBC news anchor Peter Mansbridge have inspired a series of projects aimed at rebuilding the national memorial infrastructure, ranging from the construction of museums, to the CBC’s production of a mini-series titled *Canada: a People’s History*. I will then look in detail at the particular project of ‘memorial rebuilding’ with which this thesis is concerned: the Heritage Project. I will do so by providing a brief institutional history of the Project in which I discuss how it began as a “charitable endeavor” as part of Charles Bronfman’s CRB Foundation, but was then incorporated into a larger charitable project supported by a “who’s who” of the Canadian corporate world, and secretly funded by Heritage Canada and the Office of Canadian Information. Furthermore, I will critically examine the

discourse surrounding the construction of the most prominent product of this project and the one with which the latter chapters of this thesis will be exclusively concerned: the Heritage Minutes themselves. Finally, I review the critical literature on the Heritage Minutes as well as the political and media furor created by one particular critique of the Minutes.

Chapter 5 will set the stage for the final two chapters of this thesis in which I engage in critically reading the Minutes by briefly providing us with one last piece of historical background: the outline of the 'grand narrative' that has traditionally been called upon by English Canadian nationalists to reconfigure the Canadian past in a manner that supports their current hegemonic position in Canadian society. More specifically, I will argue that this grand narrative can be read as having two main modes. The first mode is the romantic in that it follows the traditional plot of the romance in which the individual hero overcomes some sort of obstacle to bring peace and prosperity to the community. In the Canadian grand narrative, this emplotment is used to represent Canadian history as one of the progressive overcoming of natural, social and cultural obstacles on the road to peace, order and good government. As I will argue, the dynamic of Canadian history has also been such that this romantic mode must be supplemented by another mode in order for the Canadian past to be 'usable' for would-be hegemons: the comic. Unlike the romance that focuses on the individual hero, the traditional comedy focuses on the struggles of the segments of the community to resolve their differences and be reunited. In the Canadian grand narrative, this latter mode is more 'political' in character than the

romantic mode in that it emplots Canadian history as a progressive reconciliation between competing cultural groups in Canadian society.

This distinction between the narrative modes of overcoming and reconciliation will structure the final two chapters of this thesis. In Chapter 6, I will discuss how the narrative of reconciliation is deployed in the Heritage Minutes to narrate Canadian history as a consensual process in which the rare conflicts that might have arisen between competing cultural groups have been resolved in the past. In this chapter, I will critically examine this rewriting of the Canadian past by asking how the Canadian past has been revised and repressed in order to create this nostalgized vision of the harmonious national past. Furthermore, I will also discuss why the Canadian past has been figured in this way—what are the political desires and projects underlying this reconfiguration?

In Chapter 7, I will read the Minutes that instantiate the grand narrative in its romantic mode as the narrative of overcoming in the same manner. Furthermore, I will speculate on the reasons lying behind a curious silence in the Minutes. More specifically, while most of the Minutes set before the 20th century are concerned with the traditional Canadian nationalist narrative of reconciliation, the Minutes set after the 20th century tend to celebrate the achievement of inventors, engineers, cultural producers whose work has gained international recognition and so on. In other words, in the Heritage Project's version of the 20th century history, a history that had previously been emplotted as a social drama of reconciliation now becomes almost exclusively an individual drama of overcoming and innovation. In this final chapter, I will speculate on some of the reasons why such an 'individualization' of Canadian memory takes place. Finally, in my

conclusion, I will discuss some of the epistemological, political and ethical issues raised by this nostalgic rereading of the Canadian past and argue for the development of a more democratic and pluralistic 'memory culture' in which the dictates of securing national unity by presenting a glorified version of the national past give way to a recognition of the past suffering of others at our hands and a willingness to accept responsibility for that suffering.

Chapter 1: History, Myth and the Politics and Poetics of Cul..... Memory

One of the main reasons why I was attracted to the study of the political use of nostalgia is that nostalgic stories about the past weave together myth, fantasy, desire, anxiety and history in complex and often surprising ways that seem to break down one of the central components of western modernity's self-understanding: its ability to distinguish between 'myth' and 'history'. Nostalgic narratives mythologize the past that they construct by endowing it with an ontological plenitude with which nothing in our fallen present can compete. As a result of this inherent superiority of the past, the present is left to bow before the majesty of that past and to try, as best it can, to assimilate itself to the wisdom of the past in order to secure future happiness. In other words, in nostalgia, the past becomes a mythicized origin to which we long to return, it is a longing to return to a 'timeless' time.

History and Myth/History as Myth

In The Return to Essentials (1991), the eminent Oxford historian Geoffrey Elton sets out to defend the belief that we can distinguish between such a 'desired' past and the 'real' past. He does so by reasserting what he describes as an intellectual position composed of elements which "may appear to be very old-fashioned convictions and practices." (175) Central to Elton's position is the belief that we have retained our capacity to make a clear distinction between 'history' and 'myth'. He argues that throughout history, the past has always been central to the construction of collective myths. Cultural groups, he argues, "have usually sought in history a justification for their convictions and prejudices; whole nations over the centuries lived in cocoons of convenient myths..." (175).

In western modernity, however, this mythicized past has always been contested by a competing means of representing the past: history. Instead of selectively reading the past in order to create and reinforce social solidarity and communal identities, Elton argues, history “has time and time again destroyed those interpretations that served particular interests” (176). This demythologizing power is rooted in history’s strict attention to sources, the objective and detached stance of the historian, its quest for universal guidelines for action, predictive laws and, most importantly, its unwavering commitment to ‘the search for truth’. In other words, history is doubly rooted in Enlightenment thought: through its quest for a universal and objective representation of the past, history fulfills modernity’s critical vocation of disenchanting a mythologized social reality.

For Elton, the greatest contemporary threat to history’s critical praxis comes not from nationalist or ethnic mythologists but from within the academic community. He laments the recent proliferation of social scientists and historians who “question the very notion of a truth in history”. Such thinkers, he argues, assert that our view of the past changes not as a result of the discovery of new evidence but as a result of “the alleged transformation of events in the organizing mind of the historian.” (179). Such a view, he argues, “leads straight to a frivolous nihilism which allows any historian to say whatever he likes.” (179). Against this sceptical position, Elton reasserts the legitimacy of traditional empiricist-realist historiography: “We historians are firmly bound by the authority of our sources (and by no other authority, human or divine), nor must we use fiction to fill in the gaps.” (179).

In his discussion of contemporary historiographical issues, Elton clearly retains the confidence that, so-called nihilism aside, historians are advancing their “outworks ever

nearer to the fortress of truth" (179). While I suspect that many Anglo-American historians would readily concur with this assessment, the fact that the issue of scepticism is even raised suggests that the empiricist-realist position which Elton defends can no longer count upon its unquestioned and commonsensical status with the academic community. In what follows, I will briefly define the key tenets of the empiricist-realist position and then construct a thumbnail sketch of some of the major intellectual developments that have put the main assumptions of this position into question. For the purposes of this study, this tangent into the philosophy of history is very important because it will situate many of its central concerns such as the relationship between memory and our means of representation, the relationship between history and social power, the political nature of history and so on within their broader intellectual context.

Mind-Medium-World

Elton's description of history as a 'true', 'objective' and 'universal' representation of the past is firmly rooted in the historical profession's dominant view of itself as it developed in the 19th century. Under the influence of historians like Thomas Buckle and Leopold von Ranke, a confidence began to evolve within the historical profession that historians could and should try to study the past using the same methods and observational rigor which natural scientists used to study nature. As Edmund Jacobitti reports, thinkers like Buckle and Ranke argued that "Objectivity, careful scrutiny of the historical fact, and unbiased reflection, could yield an objective and universal history of humanity from its origin to the present." (Jacobitti, 2000: 9) Shorn of its mythologizing role, history would thus become a descriptive science. As Keith Jenkins argues, this 19th century dream of history as a descriptive science achieved hegemonic status as the profession developed

during the first two-thirds of the 20th century to the point where its mixture of realism and empiricism has become almost instinctual for many practicing historians. Jenkins reports that most Anglo-American historians continue to assert that they “*just know* that the past was once real. Their labours are primarily directed towards describing that hitherto existing reality rather than constructing it, and the reality so disclosed in their accounts typically takes the form of discrete/unique events distilled (by processes of source generation, source interrogation, etc.) into historical facts.” (Jenkins, 1997: 9, my italics)

For much of the second half of the 20th century, the main epistemological and ontological assumptions of this model have come under near-constant attack from many different angles. In what follows, I will offer a brief and selective history of the critique of this model by showing how its key assumptions about ‘truth’, ‘objectivity’ and ‘universality’ have come under increasing scrutiny within and outside the historical profession. I will begin by situating the attack on ‘historical truth’ and ‘objectivity’ in a broader intellectual context and then show how these broader debates have impacted upon the self-understanding of professional historians.

Representation and Reality

As Richard Rorty argues in Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (1979), the question of the relationship between representation and reality has long been a central concern in western thought. While important differences exist between thinkers within the tradition, most have shared some fundamental assumptions about the world and our ability to know it. First of all, western thinkers traditionally divide reality into ‘the world’ and ‘the mind’. ‘The world’ is typically described as having an existence and a determinate form independently of the mind. While there are significant disagreements between

thinkers like Descartes and Locke, for example, on the extent to which 'the world' determines the form of 'the mind', it remains the case that they are united in believing that 'the mind' can still be isolated in some manner from 'the world'.

This distinction between mind and world created a problem that much of western thought has endeavoured to resolve: given the ontological distinction between 'mind' and 'the world', how does the mind come to know the world? In other words, how does the gap between mind and world come to be bridged? The traditional answer to this question is that one or more of our various media of representation performs this bridging function (Rorty, 1979). Depending on the thinker, these media can range from experience to perception to ideas to language to what we nowadays call 'the media' and are given the task of 'mirroring' the world so that the mind can apprehend it. In this model, 'truth' results when, as Rorty explains elsewhere, 'the world' is "somehow represented by representations which are not merely ours but its own, as it looks to itself, as it would describe itself if it could" (Rorty, 1982: 194). In other words, a representation can be said to be 'true' when there is a direct correspondence between that representation and 'the way the world is'.

For modern thinkers like Descartes, Locke and Bacon, the problem was that not all of our representations seem to correspond with 'the way the world is'. Perceptual errors, personal idiosyncrasies, parochial cultural assumptions, political commitments, faulty media and a whole host of other so-called 'subjective' factors all act as lenses that distort our representations of the world. The modern search for truth, therefore, began with the development of a method which would act as a filter to only produce 'objective' representations which faithfully mirrored reality by eliminating the so-called 'subjective'

distortions. As a result, anything that smacked of individual subjectivity and/or cultural/political baggage came to be seen as impediments to understanding the world. In this way, numbers came to be seen as more faithful to the world than natural language, instruments of measurement than direct perception, statistical representations of the social than interpretation.

This model had profound effects on the theorization and practice of historiography. As Peter Novick argues in That Noble Dream: the 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession (1988), the idea and ideal of objectivity lies at the very heart of professional history. Adherence to the ideal of objectivity requires a commitment to the reality of the past and to truth as a correspondence between representation and reality. Historical 'facts', on this account,

are seen as prior to and independent [not constituted by] interpretation... Truth is one, not perspectival. Whatever patterns exist in history are 'found', not 'made'... The objective historian's role is that of a neutral, or disinterested, judge; it must never degenerate into that of the advocate or, even worse, propagandist... the historian's primary allegiance is to "the objective historical truth", and to professional colleagues who share a commitment ...to advance toward that goal. (Novick, quoted in Jenkins, 1997: 11)

Paradigm Shift

In spite of the fact that Kant's first Critique suggested that the mind played an active role in constructing the knowable world, it was not until the latter half of the 20th century that modernity's faith that 'facts' and 'the world' had a determinate form independently of our means of representation began to seriously be questioned. In Anglo-American thought, perhaps the key text in this unravelling was Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962). In this book, Kuhn argued that scientific

inquiry does not, as realists and empiricists suggest, begin with empirical observation and then go on to postulate general laws. Instead, he argues that every empirical observation is always already structured by a set of unquestioned background assumptions. Taken together with the explicit theoretical views and convention schemata of behaviour, this set of background assumptions constitute the 'paradigm' which governs the thoughts and practices of a given community. As Kuhn argues, these unquestioned background assumptions (one might call them 'mythic') determine, within a given community, standards of salience brought to bear on our perceptual field. More concretely, they determine what does and does not constitute a 'fact', how and where to look for 'facts', how many 'facts' constitute proof, the proper relationship between observation and theory and so on. In other words, Kuhn is arguing that there is no such thing as a pristine 'fact'. To even begin to recognize something as a 'fact', a whole host of background assumptions inculcated in each new member by a given community must first be in place. Perception and cognition, therefore, are always already theory-laden (Kuhn, 1970).

In the same year that Kuhn first published his groundbreaking work (1962), the philosopher Arthur Danto published an article in *History & Theory* which, as he puts, was "colored by [the] drama of philosophical transformation" (Danto, 1985: xii) set into motion by the insights of Kuhn and like-minded thinkers. In that article, Danto set out to do to historical events what Kuhn did for scientific observation: he sought to reveal the extent to which our various conceptual schemas predetermine what counts as an historic event as well as the character of that event. For traditional empiricist-realist historians, the event constitutes the basic and unvarnished 'facts of the matter'. These 'facts' have a determinate form in themselves and the historian's role is to uncover them (not construct

them) through a careful sifting of sources. Such ‘facts’ are to be described in a temporally neutral language such that those present during the event would readily concur with future observers that ‘that’s what really happened’. Furthermore, the temporally neutral ‘facts’ must also be clearly distinguishable from the particular historian’s retrospective interpretation of the meaning of those facts.

This should suggest the radical nature of Danto’s attempted critique: by arguing that historians always already predetermine the character of the event in their attempts to represent ‘what really happened’, he robs them of the conceit that they simply ‘uncover’ hidden and timeless truths. He begins this demythologizing project by introducing what he calls ‘the narrative sentence’. The chief characteristic of narrative sentences, he argues, is that they “refer to at least two time separated events though they only *describe* (are only *about*) the earliest event to which they refer” (Danto, 1985: 143). In a sentence like “John is planting roses”, for example, the actions of digging, sowing seed, watering and so on which he is performing at time *a* is meaningful only in light of a future state (intended or realized) in which John’s roses come into bloom. In other words, Danto is pointing out that an event is never significant in and of itself but only in relationship to a sequence of actions and processes assembled into some sort of narrative framework.

Danto’s description of narrative sentences has important ramifications for the empiricist dream of a neutral language of historical observation. It suggests that even if historians had full access to what Danto called an Ideal Chronicler—a machine able to give a total account of every event as it arose but which had no knowledge of the future, historians would not become redundant. That is because such a machine would be unable to describe intentional actions, establish causal relationships or construct narratives

because all of these activities involve linking past and future states. In order to establish meaningful patterns in history, therefore, we cannot rely on a simple ‘uncovering’ of past events. We must weave them into some sort of coherent story, imposing order and continuity on the ‘booming and buzzing confusion’ of the past on the basis of our current standpoint. In his review of Danto’s work, Jürgen Habermas draws this line of thought to its logical conclusion: “A series of events [thus] attains the unity of a story only from a point of view that cannot be derived from the events themselves... As long as new points of view emerge, the same events can appear in other stories and take on new meanings” (Habermas, 1988: 159).

The Narrative Construction of the Past

Danto’s conclusion that events take on meaning only as a result of their inclusion into a larger narrative framework and that that meaning can change when they are rearticulated into different narrative frameworks was taken up and expanded by Hayden White. In his well known Metahistory (1973), White begins his attack on the realist-empiricist model by arguing that a work of history is, above all, a verbal artifact whose content is ‘invented/imagined’ as much as ‘found’. This combination of invented and found elements results from the fact that while histories do contain ‘historical facts’ gleaned from empirical and/or archival research, they also “contain a deep structural content which is generally poetic, and specifically linguistic, in nature, and which serves as the precritically accepted paradigm of what a distinctively “historical” explanation should be” (White, 1973: 94).

In his review of 19th century historiography, White found that four main paradigms existed—Comic, Romantic, Tragic, Satire—all of which has deep roots in western

mythology. Each paradigm, White argues, has its own distinct strategies for structuring the plots of their narratives, for explaining the actions which occurred, for evaluating those actions from a moral/political standpoint. In the Comic paradigm, for example, conflict-ridden events in the past are emplotted in a manner that allows us to see how past conflict leads to present harmony. This entails what White describes as an 'organicist' mode of explanation in which the specious present is seen to be the culmination of a larger historical process. Finally, this view of the present as the end result of an accumulation of the wisdom of the past has profoundly conservative ideological implications because it places present and future generations under the authority of the past and assigns to them the role of protecting and preserving its lessons. In other words, White is arguing that our choice of a narrative framework in which to emplot past events incorporates poetic and mythological elements which strongly condition not only how that past is described but also how our present is to be understood and evaluated and how our collective futures are to be envisioned.

Since the publication of Metahistory, other writers have added to White's insights on history as a narrative construction. In "The Discourse of History", Barthes argues that historiography has gained a position of cultural authority as a result of a clever rhetorical procedure which he calls 'the realistic effect'. This 'effect', he argues, is produced when the 'signified' "is eliminated from the 'objective' discourse, and ostensibly allows the 'real' and its expression to come together" (Barthes, 1997: 122). In other words, history is able to portray itself as representing what really happened only through a systematic denial of any distinction between 'the facts' and the act of inscribing 'the facts'. The 'facts', as it were, express themselves in an unmediated form through the historian's keyboard.

Similarly, in “The Challenge of Poetics to (Normal) Historical Practice”, Robert Berkhofer argues that the historian’s myth of the one-to-one equation of representation and referentiality reveals traditional historiography to be strongly informed by the generic conventions of traditional realism. In the conventions of realism, he argues, writers “make their own structure of factuality seem to be its own organizational structure and therefore conceal that it is structure 1 by interpretation represented as (f)actuality... [traditional] history is [thus] shown to be but a conventional, hence arbitrary, mode of coding communication” (Berkhofer, 1997: 150).

While White suggests that historical narratives tend to follow a handful of set plots and Barthes and Berkhofer argue that history’s claim to truth and/or realism is the product of generic conventions, Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth goes even further in her interrogation of history’s constructed character. In “Beyond History”, she argues that even western modernity’s fundamental, almost Kantian, experience of time is in itself an historical and cultural construct. As she explains, the West started to look at time as “the neutral, infinitely receding, universal medium ‘in’ which everything exists” (Ermarth, 2001: 204) and in which all events are somehow related only as a result of the prior development of the codes and conventions of what she calls “the perspectival grammar of Renaissance painting”. In this new form of representation, space appeared as a neutral medium that is amenable to systematic and comprehensive study by universally applicable measurements. According to Ermarth, the rise of modern historical consciousness represents nothing less than the “temporalization” of this perspectival grammar. Like space, time becomes “a common-denominator medium, infinite and unconfigured, containing all culture, all theory, all physical events across the potential range from a supernova to a ringing telephone.

While the neutral time of history only became fully deployed and disseminated in nineteenth century narrative, it had already been codified by seventeen century empirical science, politics and philosophy” (Ermarth, 2001: 202-3).

According to Ermarth, postmodernity begins with the recognition of the historical and conventional character of what would appear to moderns as “the very structure of experience, the tools of thought, the discursive sets that make and foreclose possibilities” (ibid.). This theme is taken up by Pauline Rosenau in Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences (1991). In a chapter suitably titled “Humbling History, Transforming Time, and Garbling Geography”, Rosenau details the postmodernist rejection of conventional history as “a source of myth, ideology, and prejudice, a method assuming closure...a creature of the modern Western nations; as such it is said to ‘oppress’ Third World peoples and those from other cultures” (Rosenau, 1991: 63). Postmodernists, she writes, reject the modern view of time as neutral, continuous and amenable to scientific description in favour of one that recognizes partiality, discontinuity, politics, poetics and myth-making in the production of multiple and often incommensurate pasts.

Truth, Power and Persuasion

At this point, one might think that White and the postmodernists would be satisfied that their arguments have done sufficient damage to the empiricist-realist model. However, White plows on. Like Kuhn as well as the postmodernists who accept the production of multiple and often incommensurate pasts, White argues that because we can no longer appeal to some sort of pristine, unmediated reality, there is simply no way to choose between the various competing narrative frameworks. Like Danto, he argues that the historian must always place ‘facts’ within some sort of narrative framework in order to

make those ‘facts’ meaningful. Since the meaning of the ‘facts’ is determined by the narrative framework in which they are emplotted, this framework-dependency of meaning has the consequence that “*One must face the facts that when it comes to apprehending the historical record, there are no grounds to be found in the historical record itself for preferring one way of construing its meaning over another*” (quoted in Friedlander, 1997: 389, Friedlander’s italics).

White’s assertion of our ultimate inability to appeal to some sort of objective standard to determine which of these four competing paradigms brings us back to an issue raised by Kuhn. Once we recognize the theory-ladenness of observation, Kuhn argues, the problem of incommensurability arises. As Helen Longino explains in Science as Social Knowledge (1991), this problem arises because “two (or more) opposing theories accounting for the same phenomena cannot be compared with each other and against ‘the facts’ in any way that enables us to determine which is false and which, if any, is true” (Longino, 1990: 27). Given that we cannot appeal to an unmediated reality in order to adjudicate between competing accounts of ‘the world’, the question naturally arises as to why one account of a given phenomenon comes to be accepted as ‘true’ in a given time and place.

Kuhn’s answer is that this occurs as a result of a combination of factors. First of all, he argues that a whole variety of differences in levels of institutional power affect the choice of one account of the world above others. These can range from which view is institutionalized in standard textbooks to the fact that the ‘revolutionaries’ often have to wait until the holders of the established view die out or, at least, retire until they attain a hegemonic position within the community.

In Kuhn's writings, this 'sociological' account of theory change stands in considerable tension with a more communicative account. He also argues that while members of two different scientific communities do tend to inhabit different conceptual worlds, they are not doomed to mutual misunderstanding. That is because while they might see the delimited set of phenomena which their theories purport to explain in different ways, it remains the case that the stimuli that impinge on both are the same, so too are their general neural apparatus (albeit programmed in different ways). Furthermore, he argues, "both their everyday and most of their scientific world and language are shared. Given that much in common, they should be able to find out a great deal about how they differ" (Kuhn, 1970: 201). Once this communicative middle ground is established, Kuhn argues, defenders of competing theories are able to translate the insights of their position into a language that the other can then comprehend. This opens up the possibility that each can persuade the other that her particular theory can solve problems which the other cannot, explain more phenomena, offer new areas for research and so on. In other words, in Kuhn's communicative mode, persuasion seems to be the main engine of theory change.

Power and the Politics of Narrative

This tension within Kuhn's work between communicative or persuasive and sociological factors to account for shifts in worldviews echoes a greater tension within the sphere of what is increasingly referred to as 'cultural theory'. In the work of Michel Foucault, for example, truth is inextricably linked to social power. As he explains in a famous passage in "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History" (which is quite suggestive of Kuhn's influence), truth is not the product of a correspondence between representation

and reality nor is it the outcome of a process of rational argumentation. Instead, he argues that we must recognize that

truth isn't outside power or lacking in power... Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its own regime of truth, its 'general politics of truth': that is, the types of discourses which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1984: 73)

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy and History", Foucault applies his more general insights on the politics of truth to the question of historical interpretation. Throughout the essay, he disputes the traditional historiographer's conceit that she simply uncovers meaningful patterns that pre-exist her act of writing. Instead he argues that if we speak at all about 'forces of history', we must accept that they "are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts. They do not manifest the successive forms of a primordial intention and their attraction is not that of a conclusion, for they always appear through the singular randomness of events" (Foucault, 1984: 88). This 'singular' and 'random' character of events means that if history is to be inscribed as continuous and rule-governed, those rules do not inhere in the events. Rather, the 'order' of the past is imposed on events by 'the will to power' of a specific individual or cultural group seeking to reinterpret history so as to advance their own interests. As Foucault argues, this 'politics of history' is part of a continuous contest between individuals and groups over who can seize control over the rules governing how a given social order is to be described and regulated. Such rules, Foucault explains, "are empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized; they are impersonal and can be bent to any purpose. The successes

of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them..." (Foucault, 1980: 86). Given the randomness and singularity of events and the open and arbitrary nature of our rules for arranging those events into meaningful patterns, it follows from Foucault's account that history can never be 'objective' but is inescapably and perennially political.

In his introduction to a collection of essays entitled Composing Useful Pasts: History as Contemporary Politics (2000), Edmund Jacobitti skillfully uses Foucault's insights on the power-saturated nature of historical interpretation to attack the empiricist-realist ideal of 'detachment'. He begins his deconstruction of detachment by meditating on a passage of Benedetto Croce's in which the latter argued that resolving contemporary conflicts and privations "is at the bottom of every historical judgement and confers upon every history the character of contemporary history. Even though the facts that pertain may seem chronologically distant or very remote, in reality history always refers to the needs of the present situation." (quoted in Jacobitti, 2000: 26). As Jacobitti points out, we go back to the past, unearth the dead and force them to speak again because we want answers to the questions of "how did we get in this mess?" and, perhaps more importantly, "who is to blame?". Once we view history as arising out of present problems, the choice of significant 'historical' events and the assignation of causes behind those events become important weapons in contemporary cultural politics because the construction of events and causes allows the chaos of the past to be reordered into stable binaries of heroes/villains, victims/oppressors, the elect/the damned. Recognition of the presentist and

political nature of history, Jacobitti argues, means that the 'detached' historian would never have any reason to study history because

A mind purged of all present considerations ... would have no reason to look at history and no means [as Danto pointed out] of organizing the eons of events and actors even if it did... writing history is not a passive, transparent recording of the past but an active effort to compose the past into a meaningful contemporary answer to some social or political problem. (Jacobitti, 2000: 30)

Narrative and the Fusion of Horizons

While the work of Foucault is a now-classic example of the 'sociological' pole of post-Kuhnian views on history, the work of historians like William McNeill and philosophers like Hans-Georg Gadamer provides us with useful examples of the more 'communicative' approach to historiography. In Mythistory and Other Essays, William McNeill concurs with the postmodernists that it is only through the conventional rhetorical codes and linguistically-encoded background assumptions available to individuals within a given culture that the flux of time is given order and meaning. On the other hand, he argues, a historiography that seeks to get closer to the 'data' "is moving closer and closer to incoherence, chaos and meaninglessness" (McNeill, 1986: 18). A given account of the past, McNeill argues, tends to be lauded as 'true' less because it 'mirrors' the facts but because it draws upon the shared beliefs of a given group to tell a conventional story which helps to "discern, support and reinforce group identities" (ibid.).

In his exposition of this position, McNeill is well aware of the potentially ethnocentric character of much of what is historical truth. As he explains: "the same words that constitutes truth for some are, and always will be, myth for others, who inherit or embrace different assumptions and organizing concepts about the world" (McNeill, 1986:

19). However, he argues that this does not mean that we have to follow Foucault in seeing the past as being so malleable that it can be appended to any political project. Some accounts of the past, he argues, will be more faithful to what Elton would call 'the facts', more critical about their own background assumptions, wider in scope and less obviously parochial in terms of their target audiences and their subject matter.

In other words, McNeill is suggesting a process akin to Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons'. In Truth and Method (1960), Gadamer argued that every attempt at interpretation takes place within what he called 'the hermeneutic circle'. This 'circle' is the set of tacit and typically unquestioned cultural assumptions that we inherit from the cultural traditions in which we are socialized and upon which we rely to make sense of our world. In Kuhn's terms, these assumptions act as a 'paradigm' and we cannot coherently experience the world without them. While this situation does not present a problem when we remain within the narrow contexts of our own cultures, the 'paradigmatic' nature of our experience becomes problematic when we encounter a person, text or thing that does not fit our paradigm. If we want to understand this extra-paradigmatic entity, Gadamer argues, we must remain open to its meaning. However, this openness

always includes our situating the other in relation to the whole of our meanings or ourselves in relation to it... A person trying to understand something will not resign himself from the start to relying on his own accidental fore-meanings, ignoring as consistently and stubbornly as possible the actual meaning of the text until the latter becomes so audible that it breaks through... The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its truth against one's own fore-meaning. (Gadamer, 1989: 269)

Two points are important here. First of all, a new text or utterance can only be known in the light of the background provided by the already known. Secondly, this does not mean

that all knowing is the repetition of the same. Reading a text is like a dialogue in which the otherness of the text brings our prejudices into the open. This implies the hermeneutical and ethical principle that if we want to understand others, we must revise our prejudices in order to accommodate their otherness.

Gadamer uses the metaphor of horizon in order to illustrate this process. Each interpreter has an interpretive horizon—a bundle of background assumptions which facilitates the disclosure of some entities at the same time that it imposes limits upon what is knowable. This limitation upon knowing is ontological rather than epistemological: “To be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete. All self-knowledge arises from what is historically pre-given, what with Hegel we call ‘substance’ because it underlies all subjective intentions and actions, and hence both prescribes and limits every possibility for understanding any tradition whatsoever in its alterity” (Gadamer, 1989: 302). Though they may limit understanding, however, horizons are not static. As historical beings, we move in them and they move with us, they expand and contract depending on the circumstances. In trying to understand another historical period or another culture, we do not abandon our horizon to vacation in that of the other but rather we effect a fusion of horizons in which texts from the past or from other places exist in tension with present prejudices. In this act of fusion, “the horizon of the present is constantly being formed because we are continually having to test all our prejudices. An important part of this testing occurs in encountering the past and in understanding the tradition from which we come.” (Gadamer, 1989: 306) The study of history and contact with other cultures, therefore, are not only critical but they are effective: they produce

new horizons and vocabularies by which to understand our world and repudiate prejudices that hinder our understanding of others.

In Possessed by the Past (1996), cultural geographer David Lowenthal ably expresses the hermeneutic faith in the 'effective' character of history. He argues that what has traditionally been called 'history' and what McNeill would call 'mythistory' institutionalized as 'heritage' both try to make sense of a past which is present only in incomplete and protean traces. As a consequence, both can only provide interpretations and not replicas. However, Lowenthal argues that it is in the process of making those interpretations that differences emerge between the two: "history differs from heritage not, as people generally suppose, in *telling* the truth, but in *trying* to do so despite being aware that truth is a chameleon and its chroniclers fallible beings" (Lowenthal, 1996: 119). In other words, Lowenthal is arguing that 'history' differs from McNeill's mythistory in that it (at least partially) renounces the latter's appointed role of solely reinforcing parochial group loyalties in favour of trying to tell a story about the past which even those outside of the group might accept as 'true'. As Lowenthal's reference to fallibility suggests, she will still be stuck within the hermeneutic circle but her commitment to universal truth as a regulative ideal will incite her to at least try to go beyond her group's boundaries. To bring back Foucault, while he is right in arguing that the historian's account of the past will be animated by the concerns of a certain cultural formation and informed by its basic assumptions, she does not solely identify with that 'real communication community'. As a trained historian, she will also more than likely identify with what Apel calls 'the ideal communication community' and strive to provide a universally-accessible account which is backed up with strong evidence. In such a situation, as William James argued, the question

of whether an 'ideal community', 'historical truth', 'universality' and so on 'really' exist is secondary to that of the difference it makes for her to believe that they exist (James, 1948). One can admit that, like all human attempts at constructing a meaningful world, all of these things might, in the end, be illusions. However, such relatively virtuous illusions will influence her practice in a manner that reveals the limits of Foucauldian cynicism.

However, at the same time that it avoids the excesses of Foucauldian cynicism, this more hermeneutic or communicative understanding of history also accepts what philosopher Gianni Vattimo has described as 'the demythologization of demythologization'. As will be recalled, Elton argued that the critical vocation of history was that of demythologizing parochial and partial narratives of the past. However, as all of the authors cited above would agree, all acts of interpretation are inevitably parochial and partial and incorporate a whole slew of unquestioned background assumptions and narrative frameworks which have an ineluctably mythic character. As Patrice Groulx explains in "La commémoration de la bataille de Sainte-Foy", myth mediates between memory and history by gathering events from lived memory, molding them into a conventional/archetypal narrative structure and thus transforms them into 'historical facts' contained within 'real stories'. The result of this new awareness of the mythic character of historical narration, Vattimo suggests, is that Elton's view of history "as enlightenment, as the liberation of reason from the shadows of mythical knowledge, has lost its legitimacy. Demythologization has itself come to be seen as myth" (Vattimo, 1992: 39). In other words, the recognition that we are all situated within the hermeneutic circle forces us to give up the belief that we can somehow live a life free from myth. Such a self-reflective

recognition of our need for myth marks, Vattimo writes, “the true moment of transition from the modern to the postmodern” (Vattimo, 1992: 42).

What is Myth?

In our postmodern situation in which the lines between history and myth seem to once again blur, Vattimo argues that we must rethink their relationship. In “Myth, History and Theory”, historian Peter Hees initiates such a rethinking by interrogating the strong distinction which Elton makes between ‘myth’ and ‘history’. He begins this interrogation by defining his terms. ‘History’ is defined by Hees in its two familiar senses as ‘an account of what happened in the past’ and ‘what happened in the past’. ‘Myth’, on the other hand, is defined as “a set of propositions, often expressed in narrative form, that is accepted uncritically by a culture or speech-community and that serves to found or affirm its self-conception” (Hees, 1994: 3). Within the historical profession, he points out, myth and history are often considered to be antithetical modes of explanation. Since the time of the Greeks, he writes, “*mythos* (the word as decisive, final pronouncement) has been contrasted to *logos* (the word whose validity or truth can be argued and demonstrated)” (Hees, 1994: 3).

While Hees ends up in the rest of his paper retaining the modernist faith in our ability to make a strong distinction between ‘myth’ and ‘history’, most others who have written on this issue are not so sanguine. In Work of Myth (1985), for example, the philosopher Hans Blumenberg seeks to problematize this traditional distinction between *mythos* and *logos*. He begins by arguing that myth arose out of humanity’s encounter with an inherently opaque and dangerous reality. In order to neutralize this pervasive anxiety created by the sense that an unknown danger always looms around the next corner,

humanity developed myth. Myth, Blumenberg argues, domesticates frightening anxiety about the world by carving it up into manageable chunks and predictable processes through the activities of naming and storytelling. Our initial trust in the world began when all the different salient features of that world were given form and meaning once we named those features and the gods who controlled them. Once the world was carved up into names, we were able to tell mythic stories about what those are and how they came into existence. Such stories, Blumenberg argues, are told in order 'to kill fear'. As he puts it: "Myth is a way of expressing the fact that the world and the powers that hold sway in it are not abandoned to pure arbitrariness" (Blumenberg, 1985: 46). In so doing, they thus perform the same function as those forms of writing which Plato and his heirs would lump under the category of '*logos*': philosophy, science and history. Blumenberg thus concludes that Plato's distinction between '*mythos*' and '*logos*' is "a late and poor invention, because it forgoes seeing the function of myth, in the overcoming of the archaic unfamiliarity of the world, as itself a rational function" (Blumenberg, 1985: 48). In other words, Blumenberg is suggesting that the Platonic distinction between '*mythos*' and '*logos*' is itself mythic in that it is based upon an uncritical acceptance of myth's allegedly irrational nature.

Not only does myth make the space we inhabit knowable and predictable by giving names to the entities and processes that impinge on us from all sides, it also does the same thing for the passage of time. Myth, it will be recalled, relentlessly orders time's chaotic flow by carving up time into beginnings (the origin of the world), middles (the present) and ends (heaven). While this structuring of time into a beginning, middle and end allows us to differentiate time into discrete and thus knowable moments, it also has the effect of

creating a sense of continuity between past, present and future. As anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss suggests in Myth and Meaning (1978), myth ensured that the lived present and the opaque and potentially threatening future resembled the known past. In Myth and Reality (1963), Mircea Eliade argued that myth secures the continuity between past and present by locating our 'essence' in some point of origin in the past. By recalling this origin, myths tell us how and why we were constituted in a given way. Authentic existence begins, he argues, "at the moment when this primordial history is communicated to [us] and [we] accept its consequences" (Eliade, 1963: 92) by acting in accordance with this divinely-revealed essence.

Not only does myth give us a secure identity and sense of continuity, Eliade argues, it also provides us with the cultural and psychological resources necessary to overcome our anxiety about the future. As Blumenberg pointed out, myth is the primary mechanism by which we domesticate that ontological insecurity. While Blumenberg focussed on the role of myth in making the world knowable and thus predictable, Eliade goes further and explains how myth allows us to overcome our anxiety and pass from thought to action. Myth, Eliade argues, provides us with a set of stories about the past actions of the heroes and the gods. Such stories, he argues, are not just accounts of the past but also provide us with cognitive foreshortened models or scripts for our future actions. In other words, they are as prescriptive as they are descriptive and crafted to reduce anxiety about the vertiginous possibilities of identity-construction. In providing us with this stock of already performed personal and social identities, acts and already formulated thoughts, Eliade concludes, "Myth assures man that what he is about to do has

already been done, in other words, it helps him to overcome doubts as a result of his undertaking” (Eliade, 1963: 141).

Eliade’s discussion of the role of myth as a mechanism of cognitive foreshortening brings us to the third view of myth: as ideology. As Raoul Girardet points out in Mythes et Mythologies Politiques (1986), along with the explanatory and mobilizing functions discussed above, many authors argue that “la notion de mythe demeure confondue avec celle du mystification: illusion, phantasme ou camouflage” (Girardet, 1986: 13). Roland Barthes’ Mythologies (orig. pub. date 1957) is perhaps the most famous exposition of this view of myth as ideology. In that book, Barthes argues that myth is, at bottom “depoliticized speech”. For Barthes, ‘the political’ entails “the whole of human relations in their real, social structure, in their power of making the world” (Barthes, 1981: 143).

Myth depoliticizes the social world, he argues, by talking about it in a very specific way:

Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of explanation but that of a statement of fact... In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences... it organizes a world which is without contradictions because it is without depth” (ibid.)

In a recent article titled “The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myth” by George Schöpflin, many of these disparate insights of Eliade, Lévi-Strauss, Barthes et al. have been brought together and ably summarized. Myth is a set of overlapping and highly conventionalized narratives and one of the main means by which collectivities (especially nations) “establish and determine the foundations of their own being, their own system of morality and values” (Schöpflin, 1997: 19). More specifically, he argues that myth plays this fundamental role in the process of cultural reproduction by providing a community

with a self-definition and a set of shared cultural assumptions about 'the way the world is', about who they are, about how they should relate to one another, about why their social reality is organized the way it is and why this is the best of all possible situations and so on. Such a set of stories serves as the basis of intragroup communication and collective action by giving form and meaning to an otherwise unassimilable reality: "myth is a kind of simplified representation, an ordering of the world in such a way as to make sense of it for collectivities and thus to make it binding on them." (Schöpflin, 1997: 23) and is flexible enough to facilitate the integration of new members into the group.

While Schöpflin believes that myth is a powerful mechanism for achieving social cohesion, he is also wary about its 'dysfunctions'. First of all, he argues, myth achieves social cohesion by constructing an 'in' group that shares a set of sacred stories which can be sharply demarcated from an 'ignorant' or 'disbelieving' 'out' group—the establishment of cultural boundaries is always a central preoccupation in mythic narratives. In situations of intercultural communication, this can have a divisive effect because the myths that facilitate intragroup communication tend to hinder and prejudice attempts at speaking across boundaries. In the worse case scenario, the mythic construction of cultural boundaries can lead to the systematic scapegoating of Others within or outside the community. The second important dysfunction of myth Schöpflin notes is its conservative tendency. According to him, myth is doubly conservative. In the first case, while myth's oversimplification of the world facilitates intragroup communication and collective response, it hinders rational enquiry and the understanding of change and complexity. Secondly, it is profoundly conservative because it reinforces the position of political and

intellectual elites within a group. These elites, he argues, have always been the main producers, distributors and beneficiaries of myth.

Mythistory?

As we have seen, historians like Elton and Hees continue to make a strong distinction between 'history' and 'myth'. However, there are even those in the historical profession who are not so confident that the situation is all that clear-cut. In "Mythistory, or Truth, Myth, History and Historians", William McNeill argues that even the most scientific history is founded on a set of unquestioned background assumptions which he describes as 'mythic'. As Hees explains in his review of McNeill's work, McNeill argues that each cultural group tends to affirm its own beliefs in order to create social cohesion and minimize potential ontological anxiety in an ever-changing world. Furthermore, each group is in competition with others and thus tends to call its own belief-systems 'truth' and those of competing groups 'myth'. While historians in past eras in which access to 'the means of intellectual production' were limited to a small elite once felt confident to make distinctions between 'myth' and 'truth', those working in a multicultural world lack that self-assurance. As a result, McNeill concludes, "When historians exert themselves to produce a presentation of 'truths' ... that is credible and intelligible to a given [and culturally circumscribed] audience, the result is what 'might be best called mythistory.'" (quoted in Hees, 1994: 4).

McNeill's argument that modern cultural groups use history to create and reinforce intra-group cohesion and reduce anxiety about their collective future puts him into league with many of the most important students of myth. For writers like Claude Lévi-Strauss and Hans Blumenberg, close study of myth makes it increasingly difficult for them to draw

the clear and distinct line between history and myth. As Lévi-Strauss asserts in Myth and Meaning: “I am not far from believing that in our societies, history has replaced mythology and fulfils the same function, that for societies without writing and without archives the aim of mythology is to ensure that as closely as possible...the future will remain faithful to the present and the past” (Lévi-Strauss, 1978: 42-3).

Lévi-Strauss’ suggestion that myth was and continues to be central to all human attempts to give form and meaning to an otherwise undifferentiated reality has been systematically applied to the act of historiography by W. Taylor Stevenson. In “Myth and the Crisis of Historical Consciousness”, Stevenson, like Ermarth, argues that myth continues to inform our historical consciousness in important ways. In spite of the sophistication of our methods of gathering and assessing historical ‘data’, we follow mythic thought in constructing the world “as manifesting order and meaning. This order and meaning is, however, *implicitly* present in our differentiated modern experience of history. *Implicitly* historical experience is intrinsically meaningful (structured); it has ‘origins’ (beginnings); and ‘results’ (ends)...Without this implicit larger schema historical experience would not be possible” (Stevenson, 1975: 15). In other words, we follow mythical thought in carving up the past into beginnings, middles and ends and in positing causes, consequences and meanings. If we do not do so, we can never perceive historical change nor would the past have any meaning for us. Myth, Stevenson thus concludes, “has given rise to and continues to operate within our modern sense of history” (ibid.).

Myth and the Imagination of Community

Along with the doubts expressed by the above authors, the renewed centrality of the politics of memory on the world stage as well as the publication of such important

books as Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's The Invention of Tradition (1983) and Benedict Anderson's Imagined Communities (1983) has prompted many historians and researchers interested in the subject of nationalism to rethink the relationship between myth and history. In Mythical Past, Elusive Future (1992), for example, sociologist Frank Furedi argues that history is called upon to perform many of the same functions in contemporary western culture as myth does elsewhere. The very emergence of history as a field of study and as a central component of the school syllabus, Furedi argues, was directly linked to the widespread social anxieties about the future created by the vertiginous expansion of industrial capitalism beginning in the late 18th century. In such a tumultuous social climate, the study of history came to be seen as one of the best means of maintaining social cohesion by providing its students with a sense of identity and continuity through a 'rediscovery' of their shared 'roots' or 'heritage'. Besides giving them a stable sense of who they are, history also performed an exemplary function nearly identical to that of myth. As Furedi reports, the modern veneration for history is "based on the assumption that the past is a repository of moral instruction which can provide invaluable lessons" (Furedi, 1992: 27).

In Myths and Memories of the Nation (1999), Anthony Smith goes beyond Furedi in arguing that the use of history to create social solidarity and so on is not just characteristic of modern western societies but of *all* nationalisms. Smith advocates what he calls an 'ethno-symbolist' theory of nationalism. As he writes, ethno-symbolists believe that "what gives nationalism its power are the myths, memories, traditions, and symbols of ethnic heritages and the ways in which a popular *living* past has been, and can be, rediscovered and reinterpreted by modern nationalist intelligentsias. It is from these

elements of myth, memory, symbol and tradition that modern national identities are reconstructed in each generation, as the nation becomes more inclusive and as its members cope with new challenges.” (Smith, 1999: 9). Nations, Smith argues, are doubly historical phenomena. First of all, they are the products of a specific set of historic processes that have unfolded over time. Secondly, nations “embody shared memories, traditions, and hopes of the populations designated as part of the nation...memory, almost by definition, is integral to the survival and destiny of such collective identities.” (Smith, 1999: 10)

As the anthropologist Robert Foster argues in “Making National Cultures in the Global Ecumene”, memory is integral to the survival of collective identities because it permits a demarcation of cultural boundaries. Space and time, he argues, lose their indeterminate character and “become bounded inasmuch as a continuous history becomes attached to a delimited territory. Within these boundaries resides a people (‘folk’) or community characterized by some essential, natural identity...Beyond the boundaries reside other peoples who do not partake of this essential identity, indeed who cannot partake of this identity inasmuch as they are qualified as different by an essential identity of their own.” (Foster, 1991: 236-7). In other words, cultural memory creates cultural boundaries in two main ways: it binds the fluid character of time by endowing a certain space and the relationship of a certain people to that space with an origin, a past, a present and a future which can be ‘spatialized’ along a time-line. Secondly, it marks that space as that which is ‘proper’ to a ‘us’ and which must be defended against the incursions of ‘the others’. According to Foster, Furedi, Lévi-Strauss and Smith are thus right in viewing the production of national histories as being central to nationalist projects. The proclamation

of each new nation, he argues, is coeval with the inscription of an official history that allows it to differentiate 'us' from 'them'.

Official Histories and Fecalcitrant Memory

In this case, official history seems to correspond very closely to what Elton described as 'the cocoon of convenient myths' in which various groups wrap themselves in order to preserve their own positive self-image. This raises many questions, perhaps the foremost being: "What happens to historical truth in the production of collective myths/official histories?". In "La commémoration de la bataille de Sainte-Foy", Patrice Groulx also broaches this question. Like Lévi-Strauss et al, Groulx argues that myth and history "se relaient et s'interpénètrent dans des continuités de sens, occupant des positions contrastées plutôt qu'opposés" (Groulx, 2001: 51). This similarity is most obvious, he argues, in the production of "le mythe historique". This is generally an 'historical' narrative of an event such as the nation's founding or the primordial beginnings of one of the group's practices, institutions, beliefs, etc. Such a narrative mixes together memory of the event with archetypal plots and characters to create an allure of indisputable truth. In so doing, he argues, such a mythistory fulfills two important 'ideological' functions: it garners spontaneous and uncritical acceptance and it prescribes an attitude and behavioural norms to be followed if an analogous situation presented itself in the future. For the historian, the writing of mythistories seems to create a 'performative contradiction'. On the one hand, she feels bound to her chosen cultural group to write in a manner that complements and boosts its self-image. On the other hand, Groulx writes, in claiming the role of historian, she implicitly accepts "l'existence, entre l'historien et son public, d'un 'pacte de vérité de l'histoire, de sa prétention à la vérité dans sa

representation du passé” (Groulx, 2001: 51). In other words, the proximity of myth and history creates an irresolvable tension in the historian’s self-image between her role as truth-teller and her role as myth-maker.

While, for Groulx, this tension remains unresolved, others are more sanguine. In “The Functions of Myths and a Taxonomy of Myths”, for example, George Schöpflin argues that myth is a narrative about a collective past that, he argues, “is not identical with falsehood or deception. Members of a community may be aware that the myth they accept is not strictly accurate, but, because myth is not history, this does not matter. It is the content of the myth that is important, not its accuracy as a historical account” (Schöpflin, 1997: 19-20). Schöpflin is making an interesting claim here. First of all, he suggests that one of the cultural competencies of members of a given ‘mythic community’ is the ability to discriminate between different narratives of the past. They know and accept the fact that mythic narratives of the collective past and those produced by ‘history’ are qualitatively different kinds of speech acts. While ‘history’ acts as a source of factual information in that it makes truth claims about ‘what happened’, myth tends to make moral claims in that it acts as a source of values and identities. In other words, history and myth are two moments in a more generalized project of public pedagogy in which one tells stories of what happened and the other tells us how to act.

Furthermore, Schöpflin argues that there is a distinct limit to the polysemy of memory. No matter how hard they try, he argues, mythologizers simply cannot fabricate myths out of the thin air. A given myth, he writes, “has to have some relationship with the memory of the collectivity that has fashioned it...it must go with the grain of the collectivity’s memory and start from a position that seems ‘normal’ and ‘natural’”

(Schöpflin, 1997: 26). In other words, Schöpflin is rejecting the Foucaultian argument that the past exists as a blank slate upon which any story can be inscribed in favour of a position which suggests that we accept mythic narratives of the past only when they substantially agree with our existing stock of narratives of the past.

In making this argument, Schöpflin comes into agreement with media historian Michael Schudson. As Schudson argues in Watergate in American Memory (1992), “the past cannot be reconstructed at will” (Schudson, 1992: 206). Schudson supports this claim with a number of important arguments (which I will condense into four). First of all, he points out that while individuals and groups can and do manipulate the past to serve their interests, such attempts at manipulation are often contested by the living memory of those who experienced that past. Secondly, he argues that in liberal and multicultural societies such as ours, two important safeguards against the wholesale rewriting of the past exist: constitutional protections in regards to freedom of speech and opinion for those who have alternative views of the past and the existence of social practices and mechanical technologies devoted to the preservation of the historical record. Thirdly, he argues that the existence of what he calls ‘the memory professions’, whose members are bound by norms of ‘truth, objectivity and impartiality’, “is one of the best sorts of guarantees [against the wholesale rewriting of the past] that fallible human societies have come up with” (Schudson, 1992: 212). Finally, he makes an important point that is often overlooked in discussions of the social role of the past:

Examining the past is motivated not only by a drive for legitimation. It is often a search for guidance. Powerful groups as well as powerless groups seek to know the past to learn lessons... They seek some kind of anchor when they are adrift. They seek a source of inspiration when they

despair... People are more often problem-solvers than they are legitimizers.
(Schudson, 1992: 213)

Once we recognize these simple points, Schudson argues, we can come to the conclusion that “The construction of history—and of course it *is* a construction—is neither entirely free to follow the lead of power and not entirely bound up by the discipline of hard facts” (Schudson, 1992: 219). In other words, while competing groups can and will try to rewrite the past in order to serve their own particular interests, the enduring presence of countervailing memories means that that rewritten past is always open to contest.

The Politics of Forgetting

While I’m inclined to agree with Schudson and Schöpflin that the past is resistant to a wholesale rewriting, I think that both tend to underplay the structuring role of mythic narratives in the selection of things like what counts as an event and what is ignored, how and which historical personages are represented and so on. Furthermore, Schudson’s account seems to ignore another important mechanism by which the past is used to create social cohesion and legitimate the existing order of things: forgetting. As Ernest Renan and Friedrich Nietzsche both argued in the late 19th century, the construction of cohesive individual and collective identities requires the power to selectively forget as much as the power to remember. In his Untimely Meditations, for example, Nietzsche asks us to “Imagine the extremest possible example of a man who did not possess the power of forgetting at all and who was condemned to see everywhere a state of becoming: such a man would no longer believe in his own being, would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flowing asunder in moving points and would lose himself in the stream of becoming... Forgetting is essential to action of any kind” (Nietzsche, 1997: 62). In other

words, without the capacity to forget, we would see our present identity through thoroughly postmodern eyes: discontinuous, fragmented and contingent. When speaking of collective identities, Renan draws the appropriate moral: “To forget and I will venture to say—to get one’s history wrong, are essential factors in the making of a nation...” (Renan, 1939: 190).

Renan then goes on to make an interesting point. Because the formation of coherent collective identities requires the capacity to forget, the advance of historical studies “is often a danger to nationality. Historical research, in fact, casts fresh light upon those deeds of violence which have marked the origin of all political formations...” (ibid.). In other words, as Schudson also argues, the expansion of archives, technologies of preservation and what Schudson terms ‘the memory professions’ as well as increased access by members of subaltern groups to ‘the organs of commemoration’ (universities, archives, publishing industry, the press) makes it much more difficult for individuals and cultural groups to selectively edit the past in order to commemorate only those pasts which support their self-image. As Amritjit Singh and his fellow editors argue in Memory and Cultural Politics (1996), this expanded capacity and desire to remember locks contemporary societies into a continuous dialectic of memory and forgetting. In this dialectic, they write, “marginalized groups often attempt to maintain at the center of national memory what the dominant group would like to forget. The process results in a collective memory always in flux: not one memory but multiple memories constantly battling for attention in cultural space” (Singh et al., 1996: 6).

The contemporary recognition of the contested character of memory and the concomitant ‘refusal to forget’ has reached the point where, in response to German neo-

conservatives who advocate letting the ghosts of Auschwitz rest in the past so that Germany can be a 'normal' nation again, Jurgen Habermas argues against the traditional view of history as *Historia Magistra Vitae* (history as teacher of life). While he accepts that we do learn from the positive aspects of the traditions into which we are socialized, we learn much more from the failures of those traditions. "If history plays a didactic role at all", he writes, "it is as a critical authority that informs us that what our cultural legacy had up to that point considered valid is no longer tenable. Then history functions as an authority that demands not so much imitation as revision" (Habermas, 1997: 10). In other words, we must remember the past not because it provides us with 'models to live by' but instead provides us with examples of the failure of our inherited models and inspires us to construct a future which is discontinuous with the past. "History", Habermas concludes, "may at best be a critical teacher who tells us how we ought *not* to do things" (Habermas, 1997: 13).

History and Memory

As the preceding discussion suggests, many of our traditional understandings of how we know the past and the role it plays in forming our present have been challenged in the past few decades. While it is still not clear whether the arguments of Danto, White, Foucault et al. have had an appreciable effect on the practice and/or self-understanding of most practicing historians in the Anglo-American world (except perhaps to exacerbate an already existing suspicion of theory), their arguments have had considerable effect on many outside of the field. In the past two decades, there has been a veritable explosion of work produced by historians like Eric Hobsbawn and Pierre Nora as well as scholars in what might be called the 'para-historical' fields of anthropology, sociology, literary,

cultural and communication studies, cultural geography and art history, ... the intersections of myth and history in the construction of cultural memory. This exceedingly diverse body of work, described alternatively as ‘social memory studies’ (Olick & Robbins, 1998) or ‘collective memory studies’ (Zelizer, 1995), begins where the more abstract pronouncements of Foucault, et al., leave off. Scholars working within this area have produced detailed empirical studies as well as suggestive meso-level theoretical accounts of how the past is used by specific groups as a rhetorical resource in ongoing struggles for recognition and legitimacy. As Pierre Nora pithily expresses the critical thrust of this emergent field: “We no longer celebrate the nation, but we study the nation’s celebrations” (Nora, 1996: 7). For the purposes of this inquiry, a brief overview of the main critical concerns of this emerging field of studies will be useful because it summarizes and codifies many of the issues already raised.

In their useful overview of social memory studies, Jeffrey Olick and Joyce Robbins argue that work in this area tends to be organized around three major themes: identity, contestation and malleability and persistence. If there is a commonplace in this literature, it is the belief that the past serves as a vital component in the construction of present individual and collective identities. As Marita Sturken puts it in Tangled Memories (1997): “Memory forms the fabric of human life, affecting everything from the ability to perform simple, everyday tasks to the recognition of the self. Memory establishes life’s continuity; it gives meaning to the present, as each moment is constituted by the past. As the means by which we remember who we are, memory provides the very core of identity” (Sturken, 1997: 1). At the level of the individual, Sturken’s seems to be a fairly innocuous observation. On the cultural level, however, it can have important political consequences.

The identification of a distinct ‘people’ by the shared possession of common memories has always been one of the central planks of cultural and ethnic nationalism. As Hans Kohn explained in his classic The Idea of Nationalism (1944), while civic nationalism sought to justify allegiance to the nation through the promise of individual liberty and constitutional rights, cultural nationalism “looked for its justification and differentiation to the heritage of its own past, and extolled the primitive and ancient depth and peculiarities of its traditions” (Kohn, 1944: 330). As the last century of bloodshed has revealed all too clearly, such a means of producing collective identities can have disastrous consequences for those who do not share that heritage.

Two thinkers in the cultural Marxist tradition have most powerfully voiced this critical concern with the destructive potential of cultural memory: Walter Benjamin and Raymond Williams. In “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, Benjamin argues that those cultural products and practices which have been enshrined as ‘cultural treasures’ by the dominant group “have an origin which he [the historical materialist] cannot contemplate without horror. They owe their existence not only to the great minds and talents who created them, but also to the anonymous toil of their contemporaries” (Benjamin, 1968: 258). Williams formalized Benjamin’s insights in Marxism and Literature (1977) with his conception of ‘the selective tradition’. According to Williams, whenever we encounter a set of cultural forms, practices and institutions that is valorized as ‘the tradition’, we are only really seeing “an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification” (Williams, 1977: 115). Since it selectively reads the past in order to influence what he calls the process of social and cultural definition and identification along

very specific lines, Williams concludes that the enshrined 'tradition' is powerfully hegemonic. Because it suppresses alternative cultural resources for individual projects of self-formation, it encourages the "effective *self-identification* with the hegemonic forms: a specific and internalized 'socialization' which is expected to be positive but which, if that is not possible, will rest on a (resigned) recognition of the inevitable and the necessary" (Williams, 1977: 118).

As David Thelen argues in "Memory and American History", it is this centrality of memory to the construction and maintenance of individual and collective identities that gives rise to Olick & Robbins' second *topos* of social memory studies: contestation. Since memories, he argues, are a vital source of identity and ontological security, "struggles over the possession and interpretation of memories are deep, frequent and bitter" (Thelen, 1989: 1126). As Jacobitti argued, the ability to arrange the dead into binaries of heroes/villains, elect/damned and/or victims/oppressors and to assign causes for our present problems is a source of tremendous political power. As a result, competing groups tend to selectively read the past in order to celebrate their own achievements and downplay their own guilt. As Frank Furedi puts it in Mythical Pasts, Elusive Futures: "Those who plunder the past are seeking authority and legitimacy for their actions. Every form of historical representation becomes a resource when legitimacy or identity is contested" (Furedi, 1992: 6). Given that the past is a resource by which competing groups vie for legitimacy, authority and recognition, it seems safe to conclude that, as Sturken puts it nicely, "Cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories vie for a place in history." (Sturken, 1997: 1).

For those who continue to believe that there is only one history, the idea that memories can be subject to negotiation must seem ludicrous. However, among those who study how the past is used in the construction and maintenance of cultural identities, there is a general acceptance of Olick and Robbin's third *topos*: the malleability of the past. However, as we have already seen, significant disagreements exist among them as to the extent to which the past can be rewritten to suit different needs. While someone like Elton would argue that there is only one past that has a determinate form and meaning, others like Foucault suggest that it is inherently protean. Most in this tradition, however, tend to come somewhere in the middle and argue that, as David Lowenthal puts it, while groups try to secure cohesion and legitimacy by updating, upgrading and eliding parts of the past to serve their present interests, that rewriting is always contested.

Contestation and Small 'h' History

As we have seen so far, while most who have thought about this issue tend to accept that what I have been calling 'mythic' elements cannot but fail to enter into the production of historical narratives, many still want to hold on to some version of history's demythologizing function. In his writings on this issue, for example, Furedi goes to great lengths to make a distinction between capital 'H' 'History' and lower case 'history'. For Furedi, 'History' is an account of the past called upon to perform the mythic functions discussed above: to secure social cohesion and a sense of stable identity as well as to provide exemplars for future actions. However, the problem is, as Roland Barthes suggests in Mythologies, that this mythologized past seems to act as a powerful ideological mechanism which forestalls individual responsibility and critical thought and, when harnessed to ethnic nationalism, has encouraged, excused and rewarded some of the

most sadistic behaviours in human history. As Barthes explains, such a past “deprives the object of which it speaks of all History. In it, history evaporates. It is a kind of ideal servant: it prepares all things, brings them, lays them out, the master arrives, it silently disappears: all that is left for one to do is to enjoy this beautiful object without wondering where it comes from. Or even better, it can only come from eternity...” (Barthes, 1980: 151). This evaporation of history, Barthes concludes, removes any hint of responsibility that an authentically historical consciousness might place on the shoulders of the members of a cultural group.

Like Barthes, Furedi argues that the commemorated past which inspired the worst excesses of ethnic/cultural nationalism was one that, ironically enough, had been thoroughly dehistoricized. The view that some sort of ‘essence’ present at the origin continued to determine the identity of the present is one in which the passage of time can have little or no effect. Myth, as Barthes puts it, transforms history into nature. Such an ahistorical representation of identity, Furedi writes, “amounts to an eternalization of history, as certain customs and forms of conduct are regarded as transcending any specific period of time. Both the past that is meant to inform a particular national identity and that identity itself derive their significance from their allegedly constant and unchanging character” (Furedi, 1992: 63).

Against this mythicized capital ‘H’ History, Furedi counterposes (much like Elton) lower-case ‘history’. This latter form of representation can be distinguished from the former, Furedi argues, in that it holds that “there are no eternally-fixed features of society... historical thinking posits a dynamic relationship between human action and change” (Furedi, 1992: 70). This position is supported by Stevenson who argues that

modern, critical historical thought distinguishes itself from traditional mythological accounts of the past through its twin “refusal to absolutize any human creation, and the refusal to find unchanging criteria in any given period or culture of the past” (Stevenson, 1975: 10). In other words, critical history refuses myth’s attempt to locate the identity of the present in some sort of primeval origin but rather sees it as the product of an unpredictable series of decisions, actions, events and processes which unfold in a linear manner over time. If, like the mythologist, we viewed the past as the cyclical reiteration of some fixed essence, there would be no need for the study of history.

Similarly, in a completely ‘mythologized’ history, concern about the ‘truth’ of a given account of the past would also dissipate. The notion of ‘truth’ in history is inextricably bound up with the causal view that if certain actions/processes/events did not take place, a given future state would not have come into existence. In other words, the existence of future state *a* is contingent upon the prior existence of events *b, c, d...* and we call ‘true’ those accounts of the past which most adequately detail the events which lead up to *a* and the relationships between them. In a mythic world, however, since the present is the expression of some primal essence and all actions are merely the repetition of a delimited stock of possible actions, the contribution of events *b, c, d* are relatively unimportant as is the need to ‘get the story straight’ because the present and the future are always already known in advance. As a result, the modern historian’s concern with producing a ‘true’ and ‘accurate’ account of the events leading up to *a* would probably strike the mythic mind as a puzzling fetish.

Furthermore, as Jurgen Habermas argues in his work on communicative rationality, accounts of the world which base themselves on an adherence to ‘truth’ as a

regulative ideal tend to reject and supersede the provinciality of accounts based solely on the authority of 'tradition'. As Habermas argues in The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1987), whenever we seek to determine if a given account of the world is 'true' or a given course of action is 'right' or a given self-description is 'sincere', that inquiry is firmly rooted in a purely local context and draws upon many implicit background assumptions from the local speech-community. By and large, he argues, we engage in this 'testing' process in order to create the necessary level of social cohesion around an issue so that we can act collectively. In other words, like myth, this process of testing what he calls 'validity claims' tends to be rooted in local and bounded assumptions and interests and is carried out in order to create social cohesion and provide models for action.

However, unlike myth, he argues, such 'validity claims' have a Janus-face:

As claims, they transcend any local context... Inasmuch as communicative agents reciprocally raise validity claims with their speech acts, they are relying on the potential of assailable grounds. Hence, a moment of *unconditionality* is built into *factual* processes of mutual understanding—the validity laid claim to is distinguished from the social currency of a de facto established practice and yet serves it as the foundation of an established consensus. The validity claimed for propositions and norms transcends spaces and times, "*blots out*" *space and time*; but the claim is always raised *here and now*, in specific contexts, and is either accepted or rejected with factual consequences for action. Karl-Otto Apel speaks in a suggestive way about the entwinement of the real communication community with an ideal one. (Habermas, 1987: 322-23).

For the purposes of our inquiry into the distinction between history and myth, Habermas' remarks are quite suggestive. As he describes them, the functions performed by the historian whose praxis is governed by the regulative ideals of 'validity' and 'truth' are quite similar to those of the mythologist: create social cohesion around specific issues, provide models and justifications for certain courses of action, reinforce the sense of the

legitimacy of the real communication community's way of life and so on. However, unlike the mythologist who justifies his accounts of the past on the basis of 'tradition' or the divinely passed-on 'Word', the historian seeks to justify her accounts by claiming that they are 'true' in light of the evidence which she has mustered and the stories she tells. Once she makes such a validity claim, she opens herself up to critique from all sides because the notion of 'universality' is implicit within the notion of 'truth'. The result, Habermas argues, is that "The transcendent moment of *universal* validity bursts every provinciality asunder" (Habermas, 1987: 322). Unlike the mythologist, therefore, who is exclusively rooted in an empirical communication community, the historian's commitment to providing 'true accounts' of the past places her in two separate and often contradictory communities: the real and ideal communication communities. Therefore, while her interest in the past might be firmly rooted within the context of the problems facing the communities with which she identifies, her commitment to what one might call 'the myth of the ideal community of truth-seekers' will prevent her from mechanically reproducing the mythic narratives and implicit background assumptions of the former. In other words, she aspires to the fusion of horizons while the mythologist seeks the reassertion of boundaries.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used the discussion of the difference between 'myth' and 'history' as a springboard for approaching our curious relationship to the past. I have sought to provide preliminary answers as to why individuals and groups look to the past, begun to interrogate the question of what is this alternately ephemeral and solid thing

which we call 'the past' and examined the differences between two of our main modes by which we construct the past.

In this inquiry, I have found that while writers like Elton, Barthes and Furedi try to posit a strong distinction between 'history' and 'myth', there are as many similarities between our relationship to these two modes of representing the past as there are differences. As Lévi-Strauss suggests, in the contemporary West, history is called upon to perform many of the same cultural functions as myth. Like myth, we ask history to secure our group's identity and the legitimacy of the existing 'order of things' by tracing their common roots back to one or more originary events, to provide models for future actions and make the world a meaningful and predictable 'home' by providing us with a coherent story of 'how we got here'. Furthermore, as Blumenberg, Stevenson and McNeill all suggests, 'history' continues the mythic project of giving an otherwise inchoate reality form and meaning and uncritically borrows from 'myth' many of its assumptions about 'the way the world is' as well as many of the narrative frameworks by which myth orders the flux of time into an orderly series.

However, even the most cynical writers on this subject refuse to accept the conclusion that history is simply myth. For example, in the same essay in which he argues that all groups reinscribe the protean past to further their own interests, Foucault also argues that "The purpose of history... is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return; it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us" (Foucault, 1984: 95). Similarly, Furedi suggests that we distinguish between 'History' and 'history'. While the former is

concerned with fulfilling the mythic functions listed above by ‘eternalizing’ history, the latter refuses to absolutize any human creation or to find unchanging essences in the past. In so doing, it performs the critical role of stripping History of its mythic pretensions.

If much of what we call ‘history’ resembles ‘myth’ and draws liberally upon myth in constructing its stories about the past, how can we distinguish between the mythicized capital ‘H’ History and the critical lower-case ‘history’? While I believe that the difference between the two is a difference in degree rather than in kind (it is humanly impossible to critique and historicize every single assumption we make in speaking and acting—any attempt to do so would quickly result in paralysis or mental illness), I think that we can establish certain basic ‘rules of thumb’:

1. Where History eternalizes and essentializes, critical history historicizes.
2. Where History selectively celebrates some pasts and elides others, critical history is reflexive about its own process of interpretation and narration.
3. Where History domesticates the past in order to harness it to present purposes, critical history respects the ‘otherness’ of the past.
4. Where History locates the authority for its accounts in ‘tradition’ or institutionalized power, critical history locates its authority in its ability to tell a persuasive story which is backed up by evidence and subject to a public process of criticism.
5. Where History seeks to create intra-group cohesion and identification, critical history seeks to encourage the development of ‘pluralized’ perspectives on the world.
6. Where History sees necessity and continuity, critical history sees contingency and discontinuity.
7. Where History affirms, critical history questions.

At this point, it is important to note that this distinction between ‘mythicized’ History and critical history is purely analytic. Any account of the past will more than likely incorporate elements of both. That is because, like History, critical history is always

rooted in a given communication community's basic cultural assumptions about 'the way the world is', its existing stock of narrative frameworks for telling stories about the past, its basic assumptions about what constitutes historical evidence and authority, its anxieties about the present and future and so on. Given its rootedness in local traditions and concerns, it follows that insofar as 'truth' animates historical inquiry, it acts as a regulative ideal which prevents the historian from lapsing into what Heidegger called the 'facticity' of the tradition which she inherited (Heidegger, 1962). By engaging in the Sisyphean and inherently fallible labour of trying to tell a 'faithful', 'well-documented', 'universally acceptable' and 'complete' story about a given past, the critical historian disrupts the comforting eternal repetition of the Same by challenging the partial and parochial character of the myths by which we live by questioning the partiality and selectivity of what we remember of the past and how we remember that past. In so doing, however, she must rely on many unquestioned cultural assumptions in order to render her account accessible to others and thus, she cannot but fail to reproduce many 'mythic' ideas.

However, we can still find a difference between History and critical history. As David Lowenthal argues, the critical historian can be distinguished from the mythologist not "as people generally suppose, in *telling* the truth, but in *trying* to do so despite being aware that truth is a chameleon and its chroniclers fallible beings" (Lowenthal, 1996: 119). In other words, while she accepts what philosophers call the 'indeterminacy of reference' and the fallibility of all human attempts at knowing, the historian is driven by the epistemic and ethical ideal/myth that she can produce an account of the past that all potential readers could accept. She is less interested in power, legitimization and the reinforcement of

cultural boundaries and authority than in understanding and communication, transcendence and transgression.

Chapter 2: Nostalgia, Myth and Nationalism

In The Order of Things (1970), Michel Foucault echoes many of the themes discussed in the previous chapter. Since the beginnings of Ancient Greek civilization, history has been called upon to perform “a certain number of major functions in Western culture: memory, myth, transmission of the Word and of Example, vehicle of tradition, critical awareness of the present, decipherment of humanity’s destiny, anticipation of the future, or promise of a return” (Foucault, 1970: 367). In other words, the West has traditionally looked to history to stabilize and give form and meaning to the flux of time, to console ourselves that our sufferings are part of some supra-individual ‘master plan’, to provide us with models for future action and to secure collective identities and the legitimacy of the current social order. As Mircea Eliade argues in Cosmos and History (1959), this ‘mythistory’ makes the world knowable, meaningful and ‘homey’ by defending its adherents against what he calls “the terror of history”. Without myth, he argues, history would appear as an absolutely random and meaningless sequence of events that inflicted inexplicable sufferings and misfortunes upon all. In order to render our world comprehensible, myth neutralizes history “by periodically abolishing it through the repetition of the cosmogony and a periodic regeneration of time or by giving historical events a metahistorical meaning, a meaning that was not only consoling but was above all coherent, that is, capable of being fitted into a well-consolidated system in which the cosmos and man’s existence had each its *raison d’être*” (Eliade, 1959: 142). In other words, myth eliminates the threat of inscrutability, contingency and discontinuity by

subsuming all events and processes into an 'eternal repetition of the Same' and/or the unfolding of some 'master plan'.

For moderns, such a comforting, consoling and cohering reading of the past has become increasingly difficult to defend. Under the influence of what Weber calls "the forces of disenchantment" (Weber, 1946) or what Lyotard describes as our increased "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1980), moderns increasingly tend to view history as discontinuous and the present as a product of a series of non-repeatable and non-predictable events. In other words, while the mythicized world is a stage for the unfolding of a divine drama in which everyone knows the end, the historicized world is unpredictable, unstable and opaque. In the words of Foucault, the recognition of the unpredictability and opacity of the movement of time has wrenched moderns out of the comfort of 'the already known' with the result that "man as such is exposed to the event" (Foucault, 1973: 370). Such a disenchanted world, Eliade argues, is difficult to bear because it makes it hard to give meaning to one of the inevitable components of human being: suffering. It is much easier to explain and accept a personal trauma such as the unexpected death of a loved one if one accepts the story that 'she's gone on to a better place'. Similarly, entire cultures have found consolation in the belief that the sufferings inflicted upon them by their neighbors are 'part of God's plan'. Deprived of their access to the mythic narratives by which the contingencies and cruelties of history are neutralized, Eliade argues, moderns will alternate between anxiety and despair and the nihilism of Nietzsche's "last man".

In this chapter, I will argue that nostalgia is born in this moment of anxiety, despair and nihilism. Nostalgia is a kind of myth manqué that is produced when the mythic desire for certainty, identity, coherence and ontological security is coupled with the historicist recognition of the linearity of time and the contingency of our present social order. In nostalgia, in other words, the past is constructed in a very similar manner to the mythicized present: as a time of certainty and ontological plenitude in which the “terror of history” had not yet made its appearance. As Fred Davis puts it nicely in Yearning for Yesterday (1979): “Nostalgia reenchants, if only for awhile...” (Davis, 1979: 116).

Unlike the enchanted world of myth in which the gods and heroes still walk among so-called ‘regular people’, nostalgia sees the present and its immediate past and future as being thoroughly disenchanted. Buffeted by the accidents and cruelties of a volatile history, with every aspect of her being increasingly overseen and regulated by the powers of the state and the corporate world and with an intensifying awareness of her own mortality, the nostalgic subject seeks to find momentary refuge in an idealized past situated outside of history. The nostalgic subject accomplishes this withdrawal from history and re-enchantment of the world by positing a radical discontinuity between the nostalgic past and the historicized present. In the rhetoric of nostalgia, the nostalgia past is set off from the fallen present by the imposition of some sort of mediating structure (age, sin, representation and so on) that tears the nostalgic subject out of that ‘timeless’ and ‘harmonious’ past and places her in the unidirectional flow of history. In other words, the nostalgic subject straddles two worlds. While she dreams of returning to a mythicized past, those dreams are given a bittersweet edge by the historicist recognition of the

disenchanted nature of the present. As Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw write in “The Dimensions of Nostalgia”: “it is Western societies, with a view of time and history that is linear and secular, which should be especially prone to the syndrome of nostalgia” (Chase & Malcolm, 1989: 3).

However, as Walter Moser argues in “*Mélancholie et Nostalgie: Affects de la Spätzeit*”, the nostalgic subject does not fully accept the Heraclitean wisdom of the phrase “you can’t go home again”. The nostalgic subject, Moser argues, shares with the melancholic a “thermodynamic” reading of history. In such a reading, the origin is seen as the period of maximal energy and vitality. Over time, this energy and vitality is sapped away by the forces of entropy to the point where the splendor of the past is gradually transmuted into the squalor of the present. Furthermore, the melancholic and the nostalgic also share a common longing to return to that vital and abundant past. An important difference emerges between the two subject positions, however, on the possibility of returning to that past. The melancholic, on the one hand, tempers her desire to return to the past with the knowledge that that past is ‘irrecoverable’. As a result, Moser argues, the melancholic desire to recapture the past is often sublimated into reflection on and/or aesthetic representation of the past (e.g. the work of Proust). The nostalgic, on the other hand, is animated by the faith that she can turn back the hands of time. As Moser explains, the quest of the nostalgic subject is animated by the desire to ‘reverse the course of history’ and often takes the form of

a utopia—with three constituent stages: the negation of the given reality, the overcoming of the limits of that reality and that realization, fictional or otherwise, of an ideal state—but it has a tendency to become retrograde utopia. What it seeks to attain in an uncertain future is, in reality, an

anterior state which was considered to be lost but still invested with desire. In a general manner, nostalgia, if it leads to action... cannot but aim at one objective: the reestablishment of an antecedent state. (Moser, 1999: 88-9, my translation).

In other words, Moser is arguing above that while the melancholic shares with the historicist a vision of history as linear and composed of non-repeatable events and processes, nostalgia shares with myth a more cyclical view that the past can be repeated in the future. However, unlike myth that tends to see the 'eternal repetition of the Same' as being secured by the agency of the gods, nostalgia has been disenchanted. As Moser suggests, the nostalgic subject recognizes that some sort of desired antecedent state is going to be reestablished, it will require the exercise of the human will and technique to intervene in and reconfigure the present. In other words, while nostalgia is predicated upon a mythic belief in a vital and abundant past, it is 'post-mythic' in its faith that social reality is susceptible to 'social engineering'. Nostalgia, therefore, can be seen as a mythicized temporal consciousness that is both produced by and denounces a historicized and secularized western modernity. As Jean Baudrillard puts it in Simulations (1983), in a historic period like ours in which there is an explicit recognition of the constructed nature of the past and present, "nostalgia assumes its full meaning. There is a proliferation of myths of origins and signs of reality; of second-hand truth, objectivity, and authenticity. There is an escalation of the true, of lived experience... And there is a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential" (Baudrillard, 1983: 12-13).

To refer to my introduction, we can see how the projects of both *Chance* and the *Heritage Minutes* are firmly rooted in what might be called 'the nostalgia for myth'. Both are animated by an anxiety that the flow of time might well consign the social reality they

know and love 'to the dustbins of history'. In order to counter this anxiety, their projects are aimed at arresting the flow of time through the production of oversimplified but rhetorically powerful narratives of the collective past. Such narratives, it is hoped, will enshrine a particular vision of the collective as being 'timeless' and 'permanent'. In other words, in their attempts to write history by lightning, both projects betray a nostalgia for a social order in which social cohesion and collective action could be secured by a set of shared myths/nostalgic narratives. However, both also carry within them the historicist recognition that the traditionally optimal conditions for the dissemination of shared myths no longer exist in western modernity. As a result, they work with the recognition that changed social conditions demand the creation of new mechanisms for the dissemination of myths—both pin their hopes on the screen media. It is this combination of the desire for a simplified vision of a world without contradiction, the ironic recognition of a gap between the desired state and the existing social reality and the panicked and occasionally cynical recognition that this gap must be filled by an active 'production of the real' that differentiates contemporary nostalgia from more traditional forms of myth-making. That said, however, there are many 'family resemblances' to be found in both the impulses behind myth and nostalgia and the narratives of the past that both produce.

As we have seen, Moser argues that the pasts imagined in nostalgic discourse tend to be "retrograde". In making this argument, Moser is following within a well-established tradition of modern thought that identifies nostalgia as the ideology of a particularly atavistic brand of political conservatism. In many cases, he is quite right in doing so. Much of the contemporary nostalgia for 'family values' and even 'community', for example, is

little more than a thinly-veiled attempt to reinstate the primacy of white, male, heterosexual privilege. However, not all nostalgias are cut from the same cloth. As Paul Ricoeur argues in “Ideology and Utopia”, every attempt to imagine social reality contains within it an interplay between ideological and utopian elements with the result that even the most ‘retrograde’ imagined state contains elements which imply the possibility of “universal liberation”.

Ricoeur begins his defense of this argument by defining ideology’s function in a Gramscian manner as that of patterning, consolidating and providing order to the course of action (the family resemblance between ‘myth’ and ‘ideology’ should be manifest to all by this point). In other words, he writes, ideology has the function of conservation: “It preserves, it conserves, in the sense of making firm the human order that could be shattered by natural or historical forces, by external or internal disturbances” (Ricoeur, 1991: 318). However, he argues, in so doing, ideology opens the utopian possibility that the current order of things could be otherwise. In other words, ideology contains within it a tacit admission of the contingency of the social order that it seeks to define it as ‘normal’, ‘commonsensical’, ‘essential’ and/or ‘natural’ as well as the contours of an alternative reality. Given this, Ricoeur argues, if the role of ideology is to conserve the status quo by mustering the discursive weapons necessary to naturalize it, that of utopia is to subvert it by unmasking the discursive character of that reified ‘order of things’. In so doing, Ricoeur writes: “utopias always imply alternative ways of using power, whether in family, political, economic, or religious life, and in that way they call established systems of power into question” (Ricoeur, 1991: 321). To bring nostalgia back into the discussion,

Ricoeur's remarks allow us to see the nostalgic past as both ideology and utopia: a space where conservative and transgressive elements are connected in an unstable interplay of integration and disintegration.

Nostalgia: Review of the Literature

While the preceding comments suggest the basic outlines of the phenomena of nostalgia, I think that it would be valuable to closely examine the existing literature on the subject. The first problem we will encounter is one of definition. Even the most cursory glance at the varied works dealing with nostalgia seems to confirm E. B. Daniels' contention that "attempts to pin down nostalgia are akin to chasing a dream...[it is] a phenomenon of incredibly rich and varied horizons." (Daniels, 1985: 79). An Alsatian doctor named Johannes Hofer in 1688 originally coined the term 'nostalgia' to describe the emotional and behavioural disturbances experienced by homesick Swiss mercenaries (Davis, 1979; Turner, 1987; Vromen, 1993). As Suzanne Vromen narrates in "The Ambiguity of Nostalgia": "This conception of nostalgia as a disease persisted for about two centuries; as evidence of its effects spread from displaced soldiers to the educated elite, it continued to be the subject of medical dissertations" (Vromen, 1993: 70).

While it began as 'the disease of the homesick', nostalgia's link with the yearning for place weakened over time to the point that it became more often associated with a longing for a past and a sense of the impossibility of return to that past (Gabriel, 1993). As Jean Starobinski explains in "The Idea of Nostalgia", in the 20th century lexicon, "nostalgia no longer designates the loss of one's native land, but the return toward the stages in which desire did not have to take account of external obstacles and was not

condemned to defer its realization” (Starobinski, 1966: 103). In psychoanalysis, for example, this 20th century ‘temporalization’ of nostalgia has produced a description of nostalgia as a disorder resulting from either the desire to reunite with the mother or to recreate the blissful unity of primary narcissism through the creation of an ideal ego (Phillips, 1985; Gabriel, 1993). The neo-Freudian Jacques Lacan, for example, situates nostalgia at the very root of human existence. In his recasting of Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacan argued that the fundamental human experience is that of being born into a condition of “lack”, of a constitutive separation between self and other, between word and object, between the warmth, comfort and at-one-ment with the maternal body and our ‘fall’ into the world of objects. For Lacan, while this condition of ‘lack’ might have had its origin in the trauma of birth, it is in the subsequent linguistic construction of our personal identities through our socialization into what he calls “the Symbolic order”—the social language that dictates personal identities and proper social behaviour—that makes it a lifelong state. As Michael Ryan and Julie Rivkin explain, Lacan argued that “the shattering of the Imaginary [a desired realm of pure plenitude and wholeness] thus consists of the installation of a combined psychological/linguistic separation of the child from its initial object, the mother, and from the undifferentiated matter of natural existence... all our desires throughout life will consist of attempts to come to terms with this separation, our ‘lack of being’” (Ryan & Rivkin, 1998: 124).

Given its origin in proto-psychiatry, it comes as no surprise that, for much of its lexical history, nostalgia has been described as an affect. Furthermore, many recent studies (Phillips, 1985; Daniels, 1985; Shaw & Chase, 1989; Gabriel, 1993) follow this trend in

describing nostalgia as an ‘emotion’ or an ‘experience’. In the last fifteen years, however, there has been a sea change in which the vocabulary of emotion/ experience has been abandoned and nostalgia has come to be seen instead as a narrative framework for the communication of memories. This shift was anticipated by Fred Davis in Yearning for Yesterday when he described nostalgia as a “psychological lens” “which, while it magnifies and prettifies some segments of our past, simultaneously blurs and grays other segments” (Davis, 1979: 31). However, it became fully explicit in 1984, when Susan Stewart described it as a “narrative form” in On Longing (1984) and Fredric Jameson defined it as a “mode of representation” in “Postmodernism: the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” (Jameson, 2001).

This shift in the study of nostalgia reflected a larger shift in the human sciences that has come to be known as ‘the linguistic turn’. As Paul Ricoeur pithily expresses it, this ‘turn’ was the product of an increased belief among human scientists that, even in their most elementary forms, all individual actions and thoughts are always “already mediated and articulated by symbolic systems” (Ricoeur, 1991: 317). Therefore, insofar as we feel wistful and long for an idealized past, it is only because that past has first been brought into a nostalgic relationship with the present and future by means of a conventionalized narrative framework. In other words, if we are wistful, it is because wistfulness is written into the generic conventions of the nostalgic stories we tell. As Susan Stewart puts it in “Proust’s Turn from Nostalgia”: “Although we may think of nostalgia as an emotion structured by prior, historical circumstances, we find, in fact, that the forms of nostalgia are quite codified” (Stewart, 2000: 82). As she puts it elsewhere, in the nostalgic

figuration of past and present, such conventional forms channel our senses and emotions along determinate lines.

Nostalgia's Story

Having established the narrativity of nostalgia, we can now go on to ask: what is the story which nostalgia tells. In the contemporary literature on nostalgia, the traditional starting point for this discussion is Bryan Turner's 1987 essay "A Note on Nostalgia". While many writers previous to Turner did yeoman work in describing issues such as the relationship between nostalgia and the past (cf. Halbwachs, 1975; Davis, 1979) or the social role of nostalgia (cf. Lowenthal, 1975; Lasch, 1978), Turner was the first to formalize the narrative conventions of nostalgia. Turner argues that nostalgia is a central cultural discourse in western modernity that manifests four regular features:

1. The sense of historical decline and loss, involving a departure from some golden age of 'homefulness'.
2. A sense of absence or loss of personal wholeness and moral certainty. In this dimension, human history is perceived in terms of a collapse of values that had once provided the unity of human relations, knowledge and personal experience in the face of dramatic social change.
3. The sense of loss of individual freedom, autonomy with the disappearance of genuine social relationships.
4. The sense of loss of simplicity, personal authenticity and emotional spontaneity—the longing for 'childhood', 'folkways' and 'collective memory'.

While this account provides us with a valuable starting point for the work of formalizing the conventions of nostalgia, it also leaves us with at least two large gaps in our understanding of nostalgia. First of all, the four "senses" that he enumerates seem to be concerned with the lived present rather than the longed-for past. We must therefore ask

the question of how do the forms of nostalgia construct the relationship between past, present and future? The second gap in this account is that it does not help to explain why we have come to rely upon nostalgic constructions of the past to make sense of our world.

The Nostalgic Past

In order to address the questions arising from Turner's overview, I will begin by reviewing the main views about the relationship between nostalgia and the past. On the face of it, this would seem to be an obvious starting point since nostalgia is commonly thought of as a longing to return to the past. However, as this review will reveal, once we scratch a bit at nostalgia's surface, it becomes increasingly difficult to confidently maintain this commonsensical view.

Among its fiercest critics, nostalgia has been figured as being directly antithetical to history. In "The Politics of Nostalgia", for example, historian Christopher Lasch argues that nostalgia seeks to destroy any sense of continuity between the past and the present by exoticizing it as a 'lost time' that is 'dead and gone' and shedding a 'sentimental tear over its memory'. In positing a radical scission between past and present, Lasch argues, nostalgia "evokes the past only in order to bury it alive. The atmosphere of sentimental regret with which it surrounds the past has the effect of denying the past's inescapable influence over the present" (Lasch, 1984: 70). To bring back a vocabulary used earlier, Lasch is arguing here that, by pronouncing the death of history, nostalgia minimizes the radical freedom that it entails as well as the power of the claims that it makes upon us. As Roland Barthes argues in *Mythologies*, once history is evacuated from the present, nobody has to bear the burden of responsibilities. Historian Michael Kammen expresses Barthes'

insight beautifully: "Nostalgia, with its wistful memories, is essentially history without guilt" (Kammen, 1991: 638).

There are several problems with such a view. First of all, when one reads Lasch's critique carefully, one develops the sneaking suspicion that his concern with protecting the 'true' past against the depredations of nostalgia bears more than a whiff of what Herbert Gans describes as the cultured elite's "ideology of defense" that is deployed to "protect the cultural and political privileges of high culture" (Gans, 1974: 63). When Lasch cites examples of nostalgic representations of the past, he invariably singles out either media products or the sort of historical reconstructions that have become popular in museums and heritage sites worldwide. Nostalgia, in other words, is the past produced by 'popular' or 'low' culture. While he never says so explicitly, the binary logic of his argument can only lead us to conclude that the 'true past' or 'history' is only that which is produced by members of the intellectual elite. Lasch's critique of nostalgia, it would seem, is as much an attempt to police institutional boundaries as to elucidate the nature of nostalgia.

In recent years, such anxieties about our increased inability to distinguish nostalgic and mythic representations of the past from 'real history' have been exacerbated by two related cultural phenomena: the rise of 'the heritage industry' and its alleged 'Disneyfication' of the past and the 'Nostalgia Boom' in contemporary North American consumer culture. I will begin by looking at the former because the critical reaction to it has tended to set up the terms of debate for the critical reaction to the latter.

As writers like Robert Hewison, David Lowenthal, Raphael Samuel and Kevin Walsh note, the late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed the rise to prominence of a new

entity in the western cultural landscape: the heritage center. In traditional museums, they argue, the enclosure of exhibited objects behind glass, the extensive use of written texts to inform visitors of the significance of those objects and the spatial arrangement of objects in a linear sequence in order to indicate the passage of time serves to reinforce the visitor's sense of her temporal distance from the past as well as of history as an ongoing and cumulative process. If museums are structured to emphasize the 'pastness' of the past and the inexorable movement of time, heritage centers seek to reassure their visitors that 'you can go home again'. Installations like 'Upper Canada Village' near Ottawa or Disneyworld's 'Main Street' seek to reduce the distance between past and present by recreating the past in the form of a 'time-capsule' that allows the visitor to leave the post-industrial 21st century in favor of a pioneer settlement or a mythical American small town. In such spaces, visitors are encouraged to walk the streets of the (re)constructed village and visit the 'townspeople' as they go about their daily routines of baking, shoeing horses, plowing fields and so on. As a result of their temporary immersion in the sights, sounds, textures, tastes and smells of that reconstructed past, it is hoped that visitors will gain a better sense of 'what life was really like' in that past. As Patrice Groulx argues, such commemorative sites "épaissit le trait pédagogique du passé grace aux procédés spectaculaires que sont les rituels, les images et les monuments" (Groulx, 2001: 52-3).

For the critics of the heritage industry, such installations have the opposite effect. By encouraging temporal immediacy, empathy and first-person interpretation, they argue, the heritage center has the effect of reducing our sense of historical change. As Kevin Walsh argues, their attempt to have visitors experience the past 'first-hand'

denies the existence of history as process, which moves from the past through the present and into the future. It promotes synchronous pasts, where all pasts exist to be stripped and exploited purely for their surfaces. First-person interpretation often prevents the interpreter from considering historical and archaeological explanations which post-date the period which they are supposed to be acting within. This mechanism permits the heritage marketers to stave off the more radical and investigative debates that have taken place in recent years. In short, the idea of time travel, or empathy, is one of the most dangerous and anti-critical modes of representation available... (Walsh, 1992: 104)

Furthermore, as a result of their systematic refusal to take into account what Walsh describes as the recent 'radical and investigative debates' on a given past, critics argue that such installations further erode the public's sense of the past by constructing a 'Disneyfied' setting in which things like class, racial and ethnic conflict, the often violent suppression of women under a patriarchal regime and environmental despoliation are written out of the pageant. What emerges, Robert Hewison argues in The Heritage Industry (1987), is the production of a glorified nostalgic past that "filters out unpleasant aspects of the past, and of our former selves, creating a sense of self-esteem that helps us to rise above the anxieties of the present" (Hewison, 1987: 46).

This tendency of the heritage industry to glorify and edit the past in order to celebrate the present social order is particularly disturbing to many writers on the subject who tend to ally the rise of the heritage industry with the rise of the 'New Right'. They point out that the same political actors who have been most vocal in their support of the heritage industry's depoliticized and nostalgicized construction of the past have often tended to be those who are most vocal about the need to eliminate the welfare state. The reason for this, they argue, is that the New Right has come to see 'heritage' as a means of reducing some of the social and cultural contradictions potentially arising from its

political-economic agenda of reducing state involvement in the everyday lives of citizens.

The problem which such an agenda has encountered is that relative social peace and reasonably high levels of national allegiance in the western industrialized nations have been secured over the last half century through the state's provision of health care, unemployment insurance, universal education and so on. For a political movement that seeks to reduce if not eliminate the state's role in such services, the problem of how to secure national allegiance and social peace arises. This is where the heritage industry comes in. By promoting a shared bucolic and harmonious 'heritage', such critics argue, the New Right seeks to create an appearance of stability that masks the radical nature of its agenda which will have the added bonus of supplanting the activities of welfare state as the object of national 'affective loyalties' (Habermas, 1989).

Soon after cultural critics turned their attention to 'the heritage industry', another object of nostalgia critique came to their attention: the 'Nostalgia Boom' in contemporary consumer and popular culture. As numerous empirical marketing studies have suggested, the 1980s and 1990s were a period in which the use of images and cultural products from the past to sell commodities and to attract audiences became an increasingly popular strategy (Havlena & Holak, 1991; Stern, 1992; Holbrook & Schindler, 1996). A study conducted in 1987 which sampled 1030 television ads, for example, concluded that 10% of those ads relied upon some combination of references to past family experiences, the 'olden days', old brands, patriotism or 'period-oriented' symbolism and/or music to market products (Unger et al. 1991). By 1998, Businessweek devoted an entire issue to the 'Nostalgia Boom'. As Kevin Naughton and Bill Vlasic, the authors of the cover story

detail: “These days, nostalgia marketing is everywhere, from almost forgotten brands like Burma Shave to jingles that borrow from classic rock...Hollywood is awash with remakes of movies and TV shows plucked from an earlier era...Consumers can’t seem to get enough of these airbrushed memories” (Naughton & Vlasic, 1998: 1). A further indication of the centrality of nostalgia to contemporary consumer culture is the attempt by one marketing researcher to develop a statistical “nostalgia index” which will allow marketers to better match their marketing strategies to the “nostalgia proneness” of target audiences (Holbrook, 1993; Holbrook & Schinkder, 1996).

Given what we have already seen, it is easy to guess the critical reaction to this ‘nostalgia boom’ in contemporary media culture. As in the case of heritage critique, the critique of ‘the nostalgia boom’ centers around two main questions. The first question is the political question of whose interest does this new ‘regime of remembrance’ serve? Given the left-leaning nature of many of the critics of nostalgia, the usual suspects are rounded up. Fredric Jameson, for example, cites multinational capital as the culprit (Jameson, 2001). Others blame the political agenda of the New Right (Lipsitz, 1989) while others the ‘greying’ of the ‘Baby Boomers’ (Voedisch, 2002). Still others finger the growing deregulation of the media industries as the responsible parties. In a letter to the New York Times, for example, the writer and experimental musician Laurie Spiegel argues that the explosion of available conduit media since the 1980s has created a situation in which the demand for new content far exceeds the supply. Furthermore, already produced material like ‘classic rock’ or ‘vintage movies’ or ‘reruns’ are much cheaper to obtain, less risky than new material and already known and loved by at least a certain

segment of the population. The result, she argues, is that the owners of media industries are pushing America into a “culture of nostalgia” in which new creations find fewer and fewer channels of exhibition. If this slide into “rerun culture” is not reversed, she argues, “we will soon experience nostalgia for a time when vision, honest exploration, expression, and creativity were still economically viable” (Spiegel, 1990).

While the question of ‘who benefits?’ is central to nostalgia critique, it also shares with heritage critique a concern with the question of ‘How does the nostalgia boom change our apprehension of the past?’. Its most prominent critic, Fredric Jameson, argues in “Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” that nostalgia is “an elaborated symptom of the waning of our historicity, of our lived possibility of experiencing history in some active way...[its rise demonstrates] the enormity of a situation in which we seem increasingly incapable of fashioning representations of our own current experience” (Jameson, 2001: 564). In other words, Jameson argues, like the heritage critics, that the ‘nostalgia boom’ does not represent an increased cultural awareness of history but rather a retreat from our present into the comfort of the ‘already-known’. As David Lowenthal argues in “The Timeless Past”, the “omnipresence of history in media and marketplace encourages the public to vacillate between nostalgic compulsion and self-protective amnesia” (Lowenthal, 1989: 1279).

Lowenthal’s description of a ‘crisis of overproduction’ of filmic, televisual and promotional pasts creating a vacillation between amnesia and nostalgia indexes ongoing debates on the ability of the media of film and television to ‘properly’ represent the past (for an excellent overview of this issue see Golub, 2001). As Lauren Berlant argues in

“The Theory of Infantile Citizenship”, most critics share the pessimism of Jameson and Lowenthal about the relationship between the visual media and the past. She writes that it has become “a commonplace in television criticism that television promotes the annihilation of memory and, in particular, of historical knowledge and political self-understanding” (Berlant, 1993: 397) as a result of its anarchic overproduction of images. In the case of film, even an historian like Robert Rosenstone who also makes documentaries mistrusts the medium and its generic conventions. Historical films, he argues, recurrently commit the serious sins of fictionalizing the past and making use of unchecked testimony. However, he argues, these sins are relatively minor in comparison with their tendency to compress “the past to a close world by telling a single, linear story with, essentially, a single interpretation...” in order to fit the generic conventions which audiences bring to the viewing situation. Such a narrative strategy, he continues, “obviously denies historical alternatives, does away with complexities of motivation and causation, and banishes all subtlety from the world of history” (Rosenstone, 1988: 1174). As a result of this overproduction of imagery and the oversimplification and dramatization of the past in the visual media, David Chaney argues, the ‘mediated’ past exists for us only as “a series of spectacular tableaux and allegorical figures” (Chaney, 1993: 137).

According to many critics, the media’s replacement of ‘history’ by nostalgic spectacle has infected the historical consciousness of the public. In “The Timeless Past”, for example, David Lowenthal snidely comments that, unlike historians who value evidence and intersubjective acceptance of truth claims, “The public at large... tends to view history through the same distorting lenses that filter their own memories. The

collective past is apprehended as a personal and deeply felt extension of the present, and the events and viewpoints of bygone times are seen and judged in today's perspectives" (Lowenthal, 1989: 1263-54). While Lowenthal is inclined to ascribe this distorted view of the past to the epistemic laziness of the 'average Joe', Geoffrey Hartman is far more anxious about the moral and political consequences of such a distorted view. As he argues in "Public Memory and its Discontents", our collective 'past' has increasingly been taken from the history journals, yoked to nationalist purposes and screened by the media. This re-presentation has created an epistemological crisis in which "The very means that expose untruth, the verbal or photographic or filmic evidence, is tainted by suspicion... The intelligent scrutiny to which we habitually submit appearances becomes a crisis of trust, a lack of confidence in what we are told or shown, a fear that the world of appearances and the world propaganda have merged through the power of the media" (Hartman, 1991: 28). In other words, Hartman is arguing that when the 'past' is transposed from the safety of the written page on to the 'screen', we lose the critical capacity to distinguish 'history' from 'propaganda'.

Nostalgia Critique as Elite Nostalgia

In Theatres of Memory, Raphael Samuel argues that the vitriol of Lasch, Lowenthal and Hartman arises from a combination of the parochial world view of the 'history professions' and professional jealousy. Much of the academic elite's distrust of popular or public history stems from its fetishization of the written word which causes it "to hold the visual (and the verbal) in comparatively low esteem, and to regard imagery as a kind of trap" (Samuel, 1994: 268). In his writings on commemoration, Patrice Groulx

follows Samuel by arguing that the main difference between the commemorated and the historiographic past lays in their chosen forms of memory storage. Evoking the work of writers like Marshall McLuhan, Jack Goody and Walter Ong on the distinction between the oral and the literate mind, Groulx argues that while both rely on the primal fact of someone having witnessed a series of events, the way they organize that testimony is radically different. The practice of the professional historian, he argues, is guided by the “logic of literacy” in that she seeks to arrange the past in a linear and coherent sequence in a manner that preserves the distinction between discrete events at the same time that it critically analyzes the relationship between those events. The practice of the heritage industry, on the other hand, much more closely follows an “oral logic” in which linearity and historical accuracy gives way to a temporal syncretism and a the repetition of mythic formulae. As Groulx explains, in non-literate forms of memory storage, “La mémoire passé pour affective, sélective, complaisante, synthétique, immédiatement utile, plurielle...” (Groulx, 2001: 50).

Compounded with this distrust of ‘graven images’ is the fact that professional and popular history “are in some sort competing for the same terrain. Each, after its own fashion, claims to be representing the past ‘as it was’” (Samuel, 1994: 270). Furthermore, it appears that popular history is winning the competition. While history departments are shrinking and the writings of professional historians have become increasingly esoteric, “Heritage has a large public following... It is something that people care passionately about” (Samuel, 1994: 270). Not all historians, however, share the concerns reported by Samuel. In Silencing the Past (1985), for example, Michel-Rolph Trouillot makes the

point that while professional historians do work with a more explicit awareness of the major theoretical and methodological issues governing the representation of the past, they are not the sole or even the most important teachers of history. As he observes: “Long before average citizens read the historians who set the standards of the day for colleagues and students, they access history through celebrations, site and museum visits, movies, national holidays, and primary schoolbooks” (Trouillot, 1995: 20). Unlike Lowenthal and Hartman, however, Trouillot argues that this popular history and academic history do not exist in two solitudes but rather that the popular history will encourage some to delve into academic history and learn to critique and correct potentially distorted representations of the past. In that manner, academic history will have at least an indirect impact on the shape of public or popular history. Similarly, Peter Seixas credits the heritage industry with arousing and intensifying the public’s historical consciousness. Tellingly, however, he still holds that it is up to the professional historians and history educators to advance what he calls “critical” historical consciousness (Seixas, 2002).

Trouillot’s comments on the reciprocal nature of popular and professional history suggest another shortfall of Lasch’s view. In his critique of nostalgia, he seems to suggest that ‘nostalgia’ and ‘history’ are mutually exclusive: if you believe one, you deny the other. Such an epistemic fundamentalism seems to greatly oversimplify our relationship to the past. Simple phenomenological reflection would seem to confirm the fact that while we do look to the past ‘historically’ in order to satisfy our desires to understand how the present came to have its current shape, this is not the only reason why we look to the past. As writers in the hermeneutic tradition point out, we also look to the past in order to

recover ideas, ideals, ways of living and so on which are embedded within the cultural heritage which we share with others and which might have trouble expressing themselves in our present. In this scenario, the past serves as a source of counter-factual ideals that will serve as the basis of future projects of identity-construction. While the past can be recovered and reanimated as a model for the future, it is also often used as a foil to speak of present conflicts and/or injustices. The spate of films since the 1970s dealing with the history of slavery in the U.S., for example, can be seen as a 'safer' way to confront and discuss America's ongoing racial problems. Less seriously, the bucolic and slow-moving past represented in a television series like "The Road to Avonlea" can also simply serve as a source of pleasant diversion/respice from the complexities and frenetic pace of contemporary life.

While many more modalities of our relationship with the past can no doubt be enumerated, it is quite likely that my claim of a plurality of trajectories to the past would be rejected by Lasch and his ilk. For such writers, there is only one past and one history and all the alternative modes of representing the past are dismissed as 'inauthentic'. Furthermore, such critics typically assert that the further the modernizing processes of differentiation and mediation extend themselves, the more inauthentic our relationship to the past becomes. Fredric Jameson, for example, laments in "Postmodernism and Consumer Society" that in postmodern times, "Cultural production has been driven back inside the mind, within the monadic subject: it can no longer look directly out of its eyes at the real world for the referent but must, as in Plato's cave, trace its mental images of the world on its confining walls... we seem condemned to seek the historical past through our

own pop images and stereotypes about the past, which itself remains forever out of reach” (Jameson, 1998: 10).

The irony about such philippics against ‘inauthentic’ or ‘nostalgia’ representations of the past is that they are also inherently nostalgic. As Jacques Derrida argues in “Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences”, such attempts to distinguish between real/authentic ‘history’ and inauthentic ‘nostalgia’ is itself rooted in “an ethic of nostalgia for origins, an ethic of archaic and natural innocence, of a purity of presence and self-presence in speech... which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile” (Derrida, 1978: 292). In other words, Derrida is suggesting here that in their assertions (which are almost never supported by evidence) that our present state is one in which we have fallen from a direct contact with a fully present ‘history’ to a mediated state of nostalgia from which the ‘real past’ has been evacuated, Lasch, Jameson et al. are themselves guilty of a nostalgia for history (see also Gans, 1974). Furthermore, this nostalgia for history is also a nostalgia for continuity. In “The Politics of Nostalgia”, Lasch makes the argument that, in its emphasis on ‘the pastness of the past’, nostalgia eliminates any sense of continuity between past and present with the result that “Our sense of discontinuity is now so great that even very recent periods, like the fifties or sixties, have become objects of nostalgic retrospect” (Lasch, 1984: 70). Again, Jameson pushes Lasch’s general line of reasoning to its logical conclusion. Our contemporary sense of time’s flow, he argues, has become so discontinuous that our cultural memory has come to resemble that of the schizophrenic who has lost all capacity to distinguish past, present and future and thus is condemned to live an ‘eternal present’.

However, as I suggested earlier, such critical concerns can be easily countered by suggesting that while people are still connecting the present to the past, they are simply making different kinds of connections than those sanctioned by the likes of Lasch and Jameson. As Marita Sturken argues in Tangled Memories, the description of contemporary memory as schizophrenic and amnesiac “is highly superficial, relying on evidence of memory in traditional forms and narratives... The ‘culture of amnesia’ actually involves the generation of memory in new forms, a process often misinterpreted as forgetting” (Sturken, 1997: 2). In other words, Sturken is suggesting that the lamentations of Lasch and Jameson which figure the shift from what she calls ‘traditional forms and narratives’ of representing the past as ‘nostalgic’, ‘schizophrenic’ and ‘amnesiac’ obscure a much different process: the rise of new memorial forms and narratives. As Harvey Kaye points out in The Powers of the Past (1991), the recognition of these emerging forms of memory means that: “we should avoid dumping all such [new memorial] efforts and projects into one barrel marked nostalgia, entertainment, bogus history or fraud” (Kaye, 1991: 20).

Nostalgia and Myth

While Kaye and Sturken’s point about the polemical use of the term ‘nostalgia’ is well-taken, it is necessary to make some distinction between the conventions of ‘history’ as a memory-genre and the conventions of nostalgia. As I argued in the previous chapter, an ideal model of ‘critical history’ would be an attempt to serialize past events in a narrative. In so doing, the narrator would be bound to adhere to the following conventions: to treat all historical objects, events and processes as unfolding over time in a

non-predictable and non-repeatable manner, to 'tell all sides of the story', to try (within the limits of the hermeneutic circle) to understand the past 'on its own terms', to back up truth claims with intersubjectively accessible evidence, to submit one's narrative to public scrutiny and criticism, to break down parochial cultural assumptions and to question rather than comfort. In so doing, the 'past' constructed by the historian appears as contestable, contingent, discontinuous and polysemic as the present and it is given a certain form and order simply by virtue of being arranged into a beginning, middle and end.

The nostalgic past, on the other hand, takes on a mythic character. Where the 'historic' past is (like the present) riven with conflict, the nostalgic past is harmonious, where discontinuity, contingency, deficiency and inscrutability characterize the former, the latter is characterized by coherence, stability, necessity and plenitude. As Edward S. Casey argues in "The World of Nostalgia", the difference between the two pasts lies in the fact that their production involves two distinctly different mental tasks. 'History', he argues, is the product of the mentally taxing labour of recollecting actually existing past individuals, events and processes and re-presenting them in a determinate and veridical sequence.

Nostalgia, on the other hand, speaks about a past that was

never strictly present... the past about which we are nostalgic is not containable in any finite set of recollections... We do, of course, remember details, indeed whole scenes and sequences, that resonate about the world about which we are nostalgic. But we never once, in any exactly designatable time, experienced the world of our childhood as an isolable entity or event: not because it was before our time or out of time altogether but because it was never, and could not be, the proper content, the 'object' of any experience or total set of experiences. Such a world, the world-under-nostalgement, has a past of another type, another ontic order, from that of the recollected past—even if it is often cued in remembrances of things past. (Casey, 1987: 365-6)

In "Toward a Phenomenology of Nostalgia", James G. Hart further explores the curious nature of that 'nostalgic past'. History, as we have seen, involves the recollection and representation of a past that was once present. Nostalgia, as we have also seen, similarly draws upon memories from that 'past present' but in a very different manner. Nostalgia, he argues, does not simply recall the past but 'imaginatively reconstitutes' the past in a manner that "the hopes of the past as well as those of the actual present find a form of realization. In the nostalgic intention the actual now, with its temporal past and future horizons, is gathered into the revered nostalgic past... In it the dispersed projects of life find their unity and this life-project is not confined to the lost past but is the secret of the present protention of the future" (Hart, 1973: 404-5). In other words, Hart is arguing that while it draws upon disparate memories of the past in order to furnish it with settings, plots and characters, nostalgia is not primarily concerned with 'what happened in the past'. Instead, it is primarily about 'what should happen' in the present and future. As Linda Hutcheon puts it nicely in "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern", nostalgia "operates through what Mikhail Bakhtin called an "historical inversion": the ideal that is not being lived now is projected into the past. It is "memorialized" as past, crystallized into precious moments selected by memory, but also by forgetting, and by desire's distortions and reorganizations" (Hutcheon, 1998a).

Once we recognize its licentious and mythic commingling of memory and desire, the hostility of intellectuals like Lasch and Jameson towards nostalgia becomes less surprising. As I discussed in my introduction, modern western thought is predicated upon the belief that 'truth' could only emerge once 'volitional', 'subjective', 'mythic' or

'ideological' elements were purged from our media of representation and that the role of the intellectual was to oversee that process of purgation in order to protect our ability to distinguish between 'reality' and 'fantasy'. In getting up in arms about nostalgia, therefore, Lasch and Jameson were simply filling their prescribed social roles as the 'truth police'. For such intellectuals, nostalgia's blurring of the boundaries between utopian desire and historical fact, between past, present and future, between ideal and reality threatens to undermine the entire intellectual edifice upon which they have constructed their life-projects.

In Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire (1925), Maurice Halbwachs, perhaps the founding figure in 'social memory studies', describes nostalgia in a manner that would seem to allay many of the fears of Lasch and Jameson. More specifically, he makes two arguments that would seem to mitigate their assertion that nostalgia has the power of replacing history. First of all, he argues that while a nostalgic construction of the past is endemic to adult life, it is only intermittently present. As he explains, most of adult life is spent acting and reacting in response to a mutable present. In such cases, he argues, our concern with the past is rooted in a desire to understand how the past informs that present and how it thus can act as a guide for future actions. In this mode, we tend to see the past through the eyes of 'history'. We shift into the nostalgic mode of remembrance, on the other hand, in those moments when we turn away from action and allow ourselves to slide into a past that is as much the product of 'reverie' as it is of recollection. In other words, we alternate from 'history' to 'nostalgia' depending upon our situation.

At this point, Lasch or Jameson might respond that Halbwachs' analysis confirms theirs. Given that a pervasive sense of spiritual exhaustion and the atrophying of most forms of collective action characterize our postmodern times, Halbwachs' arguments give further credence to their view that nostalgia is replacing history. Halbwachs, however, might reply with his second argument: while we do tend to alternate between these two modes of remembrance, it is part of the cultural competence of the adult that we are able to distinguish between the imagined/desired past and the 'real' past which continues to inform our present. As Suzanne Vromen explains in her review of Halbwachs' views, he believed that in spite of our tendency to occasionally slip into nostalgic reverie, "individuals know that the only real world is the here-and-now and they adapt to it" through an historical understanding of the causal processes which gave the 'here-and-now' its form. In other words, as long as we have to act, we need 'history'.

The 'Positive' Social Functions of Nostalgia

If 'history' satisfies our need to know the past in order to understand the present and predict the future, what need does nostalgia satisfy? In "Nostalgic Narratives: an Exploration of Black Nostalgia for the 1950s", Janelle Wilson provides us with some suggestive answers to this question. She begins by rejecting the arguments of Lasch and his ilk that 'nostalgia falsifies the past' and/or that 'nostalgia is reactionary'. Things are, she writes, "more complicated than that" (Wilson, 1999: 317). First of all, she approvingly cites Fred Davis' argument that "nostalgia is one of the means...we employ in the never ending work of constructing, maintaining, and reconstructing our identities" (Davis, 1979: 31). In a series of interviews with black Americans, Wilson found "a tendency for

individuals to rediscover former selves and to make sense of their present while reconstructing the past” (Wilson, 1999: 318). As Hart suggested, when we withdraw from active engagement with the world and reflect upon the passage of time, we are able to arrange our past, present and future selves into a nostalgic narrative structure. This structure, he argues, invests our ‘selves’ with an internal coherence that is often lacking in our frantic attempts to ‘manage’ the competing demands of the fractured present. In other words, nostalgia provides us with a sense of a stable identity.

Not only does it provide them with a source of identity and continuity, Wilson’s interviewees also identified the nostalgic past as a source of ideals and values. As she writes: “nostalgia may be one means of discovering one’s sense of the ‘Good’ or the ‘Right’” (Wilson, 1999: 318). As I argued earlier, nostalgia should be read less as making a series of truth-claims about the past than as a series of normative claims about our actions in the present and the future. While it makes use of various vestiges of the past to construct an ideal world, it is almost always a statement about the present and future. Susan Stewart, for example, argues that while the nostalgic construction of the past serves to expiate a lingering sense of guilt, it also uses that Golden Age as a prescription for the future. As Susan Stewart explains in *On Longing*: “nostalgia wears a distinctly utopian face, a face that turns toward a future-past, a past which has only ideological reality.” (Stewart, 1983: 24). Following Stewart’s recognition of the utopian character of nostalgia, Stuart Tannock reaches the conclusion in “Nostalgia Critique” that in the rhetoric of nostalgia, a dialectical tension always exists between the retreat into the past from the vicissitudes of the present and the retrieval of utopian possibilities which are

perceived to be inactive in the present. In nostalgia, in other words, we at once withdraw from the present the same time that we develop resources to critique and try to change it. In the words of Raoul Girardet, nostalgia is thus mythic in the fullest sense of the term: “à la fois fiction, système d’explication et message mobilisateur” (Girardet, 1986: 98).

In “Toward a Phenomenology of Nostalgia”, James Hart brings together all of these reflections on the ‘positive’ uses of nostalgia to argue that it plays the same role in contemporary society as that played previously by myth. Nostalgia and myth, he argues, both posit the existence of a golden age of ontological plenitude from which the present is somehow fallen. Secondly, both figure the past as “one which, because of its exceeding potentiality and exemplarity, comprehends and endures, and is never irretrievably lost” (Hart, 1973: 415). In other words, the mythic and nostalgic past acts as a guarantor of continuity, stability and identity in an ever-shifting present and provides values, ideals and models for future actions. Finally, he argues that in so doing, myth and nostalgia secure us from what Eliade called “the terror of history”. In the utopian time-spaces of myth and nostalgia, “events unfold transcendent to the events of actual history...they are the real, and therefore have permanent validity and presence” (Hart, 1973: 416).

While Hart limits his discussion of the relationship between nostalgia and myth to the question of how they organize the relationship between past, present and future, this equivalence could be extended even further. As we have already seen, theorists of myth like Blumenberg and Eliade argue that humans developed myth in order to quiet a pervasive sense of ontological anxiety about the present and future. This is also the overwhelming explanation given for the rise of nostalgia. If there is one locus classicus for

this interpretation, it is Fred Davis' Yearning for Yesterday. In that book, Davis argues that when we think about nostalgia, we should always keep in mind that:

(1) the nostalgic evocation of some past state of affairs always occurs in the context of present fears, discontents, anxieties, or uncertainties, even though they may not be in the forefront of awareness, and (2) it is these emotions and cognitive states that pose the threat of identity discontinuity...that nostalgia seeks, by marshalling our psychological resources for continuity, to abort or, at the very least, deflect. (Davis, 1979: 34)

In the face of sudden changes in our social environment (wars, natural disasters, economic restructuring, the breakdown of traditional social conventions, forced immigration and so on), nostalgia “acts to restore, at least temporarily, a sense of sociohistoric continuity with respect to that which had verged on being rendered discontinuous” (Davis, 1979: 104). In other words, nostalgia neutralizes the anxiety wrought by sudden change by placing the new and unfamiliar in the light of the already-known. In so doing, nostalgia restores our sense that our social world is knowable and predictable and thus allows us to overcome our anxiety so that we can act.

Nostalgia reduces the anxiety of discontinuity, Davis argues, through three main operations. The first operation secures continuity of identity by cultivating an appreciative stance towards former selves. As he writes, the “rhetorical formula seems simple enough: if, as my nostalgic evocation of the past tells me, I was lovable and worse then despite adverse or dangerous conditions, I am likely to prove lovable and worthy now despite the anxieties and uncertainties of the present” (Davis, 1979: 36). The second operation is closely related to the first. In nostalgic narratives, past selves take on an appealing character because nostalgia also has a tendency to minimize, if not elide, the unpleasant,

unjust, painful, humiliating, shameful and guilt inducing aspects of the past. Finally, nostalgia involves a celebration of aspects of selves as well as individuals who were considered to be marginal, eccentric or exotic in the 'lived past'. In revealing and revaluing those previously marginal or eccentric aspects of our individual and collective pasts, Davis argues, nostalgia allows us to imagine a more inclusive and pluralistic social reality than the constrained and exclusionary one in which we currently live.

Nostalgia's Silences

The work of the cultural geographer David Lowenthal echoes many of the themes sounded by Davis. Like Davis, Lowenthal argues that nostalgia arises as a result of contemporary anxiety over widespread social, cultural, economic and technological change. In our anxious present, the future seems threatening and uncertain to us. The past, on the other hand, is seen as "tangible and secure... It is on the whole unsurprising; its measure has been taken. We are at home in it because it is our home—the past is where we come from." (Lowenthal, 1985: 4). In recent years, Lowenthal argues, such "nostalgic dreams [of returning home] have become almost habitual, if not epidemic." (ibid.). Lowenthal also stresses nostalgia's tendency to exercise 'selective memory' when it figures the past. Like Davis, Lowenthal argues that nostalgia's past is produced through the updating and upgrading of the past in order to make it conform to present beliefs and wishes to endow it with today's exemplary perspectives. In so doing, it also excludes that which conflicts with this updated and upgraded past. Through this process of selective remembering and forgetting, he argues, the nostalgic text renders the past accessible,

comprehensible and appealing for its audience in ways that the confusing and conflict-ridden present and unknown future have long ceased to be.

However, unlike Davis who tends to view nostalgia's selective memory as, on the whole, 'functional', Lowenthal is quick to point out many of the problems that the nostalgic reading of the past can engender. For example, in Possessed by the Past, he argues like Davis that nostalgia tends to minimize feelings of shame and guilt about and inspire pride in the collective past. The problem is, Lowenthal argues, that while such a revision of the past can reinforce group cohesion, it often does so through a denial of the sufferings that the group has wrought upon other groups. For example, in the Hollywood 'western', the process of subjugating the frontier was nostalgically figured as emblematic of white America's enterprising nature, its ability to impose civilization where there had only been empty space, the relentless nature of the 'American spirit' and so on. As is well known, this narrative served for many decades to secure the pride and self-image of white America. It could only do so by minimizing, if not eliminating, the idea that 'the West' was not unoccupied land but that it was seized through genocidal methods from the native Americans and through imperialist aggression from the Spanish. In other words, the 'Western' made white Americans feel better about their past and present through a systematic denial of their historic guilt. One group's nostalgia often requires the suppression of the memory and voices of others.

Furthermore, in the recent past, there have been several tragic instances in which nostalgia has gone far beyond the already intolerable silencing of the expression of the counter-memories of other groups to an attempt to silence these others tout court. While

many writers on the subject have argued that nostalgia is a simple “escape valve” from a chaotic present (Davis, 1979) or a “bittersweet dalliance” with an imagined past (Daniels, 1985) or even the latest “opiate of the people” (Hewison, 1987; Walsh 1992) with little or no political content, most believe otherwise. In “*Mélancolie et Nostalgie: Affects de la Spätzeit*”, for example, Walter Moser (1999) argues the nostalgic subject is animated by the utopian faith that she can ‘turn back the clock’ and reconstitute the golden past.

Translated into action, this tends to lead to the attempt to intervene in and restructure the lifeworld in hopes of reestablishing a previously existing state. When nostalgia’s ‘call to arms’ leads, for example, the drive of the ‘New Urbanists’ to reconfigure urban space along 19th century lines in order to facilitate the interaction of people rather than the movement of cars and trucks, it seems to be admirable enough. However, when it turns into a longing for ‘Greater Serbia’, it can have baleful consequences for those whose material existence disrupts the desired state. In such cases, the nostalgic subject does not simply deny history but actively seeks to destroy any trace of a past that contradicts the past that it desires to resurrect. In such cases, the ‘narrative cleansing’ which produces the full and happy past of nostalgia can become the spur for ‘ethnic cleansing’.

If the likes of Lasch, Jameson and Lowenthal have reason to be concerned about nostalgia, it is in cases in which the ‘longing for home’ has been appended to nationalistic projects and become the justification for xenophobic and genocidal policies. However, at the same time, we must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater. Not only does it perform many of the positive functions cited above but it also provides many of those whom have been ‘the victims of history’ with the resources to help them to endure

their sufferings and to resist future attempts to re-victimize them. For example, as Paul Gilroy details in There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack (1987), reggae and hip-hop music have served to catalyze resistance among blacks throughout the English-speaking world providing them with a vocabulary with which to critique capitalism and the labour process as well the disciplinary activities of the state. This critique, he argues, is ultimately founded on a nostalgic appeal to their pre-slavery history. Such an appeal will re-establish “the epistemological and historical superiority of roots knowledge and culture over the partial and unstable knowledge(ism) which guides the practice of the oppressors” (Gilroy, 1987: 208). In other words, by leaving behind the fallen and obfuscatory present and returning to their ‘roots’ in order to recover the wisdom of the prelapsarian past, blacks will begin to emancipate themselves from “the mental slavery which has remained intact even as the physical bonds have been untied” (Gilroy, *ibid.*). Remembering and restoration are thus inherently linked. As Stuart Tannock puts it, the “determination to comb the past for every sense of possibility and destiny it might contain...is a resource and strategy central to the struggles of all subaltern cultural and social groups. Nostalgia here works to retrieve the past in support of the future”(Tannock, 1994: 458-59).

Nostalgia and Nationalism

As students of nationalism like John Hutchinson, Raoul Girardet and Anthony Smith argue, the nostalgic retrieval of the golden past in support of the future has always been central to the nationalist mind. In The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism (1987), for example, Hutchinson argues that cultural nationalists have a tendency to view the present as decadent and anomic as a result of the nation's excessive reliance upon and acceptance

of foreign cultural forms, deals and values. In order to reinvigorate and reintegrate the nation, they argue, it must return to the wellspring of its particular genius: the national tradition that flourished in its 'Golden Age'. Only once when the nation reconnects with its past and its traditions can there be any hope of national renaissance. In other words, as in nostalgia, our only hope of saving the future from the fallen present is to return to the past. This illuminates, Girardet argues in Mythes et mythologies politiques, the centrality of terms like 'renaissance' and 'rebirth' in nationalist movements. As he explains: "C'est par rapport à l'image, idéologiquement reconstruite, d'une nation disparue de l'histoire, mais dont on entend retrouver la mémoire, exalter la grandeur passée, que se trouve légitimé le combat à entreprendre pour en assurer la résurrection" (Girardet, 1986: 104).

In Anthony Smith's paper titled "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal", he extends Girardet's and Hutchinson's insights by providing us with an interesting and in-depth discussion of the function of the Golden Age in nationalist ideology. According to Smith, the 'Golden Age' serves a number of functions for nationalist projects. First of all, the postulation of a "Golden Age" satisfies the need for *authenticity*. Nationalists, he writes, seek to 'realize themselves' in and through the nation-to-be, believing that the nation has always been there, concealed under the debris of the ages, waiting to be 'reborn' through the rediscovery of the 'authentic self'" (Smith, 1997: 48). This rediscovered authentic identity is then used to stake a claim to shared origins and ethnic ties with others as well as to differentiate the 'authentic' community off from others. As Smith explains, 'Golden Ages' thus help to construct and reinforce cultural boundaries

because “they hold up values and heroes that we admire and revere—which others cannot and do not, because they have different values and heroes” (Smith, 1997: 49).

The second function played by the ‘Golden Age’ is that of re-rooting the community in its ‘homeland’. The return to the ‘Golden Age’ is not just a movement back in time but also one in space to the point of the nation’s origin. This geographical point of origin is the scene of the nation’s greatest achievements and acts of heroism. Furthermore, it is typically figured as the wellspring of the national genius. This explains why the recovery of ‘homelands’ is so central to nationalist movements. As Smith explains, the nationalist believes that only “by re-rooting itself in a free homeland can a people rediscover its ‘true self’” (ibid.).

Thirdly, like both nostalgia and myth, the ‘Golden Age’ acts to restore a sense of continuity in the face of the flux of time. By locating the community’s origin in a specific time and place, the ‘Golden Age’ begins the process of domesticating what Eliade called the “terror of history”. As Smith explains beautifully, in postulating an origin,

The flux of ceaseless change is thereby rendered manageable through an intellectual framework which give the people’s history a coherence and design, by relating earlier to later stages of their past...the task of the nationalist is essentially one of political archaeology: to rediscover and reconstruct the life of each period of the community’s history, to establish the linkages and layerings between each period, and hence to demonstrate the continuity of ‘the nation’, which is assumed to persist as a discrete, slowly changing identity of collective values, symbols and memories” (Smith, 1997: 50).

Smith’s final two functions of the ‘golden age’ are intimately interrelated. The evocation of the golden age, he argues, is often done against the background of a present that is seen as somehow fallen or degraded. By evoking past splendor, Smith argues, this

myth serves to restore the nation's sense of its own self-worth and dignity. This sense of self-worth is further buttressed through the production of 'others' whose cultural achievements and values cannot but fail to fare miserably in comparison to those of the 'golden age'. In essence, the myth of the golden age tells the nation that while the others might presently have the upper hand, once we were the people most favored by the gods and we can be again if we reconnect to our golden past. In this way, the myth of the Golden Age becomes a myth of ethnic election or glorious destiny (Smith's final function). As Smith explains, the nationalist believes that the golden past

prepares a community for its ordained destiny, and provides it with a hidden direction and a goal beneath the obscuring present. In more concrete terms, each generation's understanding of the communal past and particularly of its golden age(s) helps to shape the future of that community. The selected elements of the heroic era in each generation's understanding will guide the community towards its goal and be recreated in its glorious future. So 'we shall be renewed as in the days of old', and 'be as we once were, in spirit. (Smith, 1997: 51).

Summary of the Literature on Nostalgia

In the work of writers like Lowenthal, Davis, Hutchinson and Smith, the tight connection between nostalgia, nationalism and myth becomes manifest. Nationalism, they suggest, is founded upon a nostalgic reading of the communal past, present and future in which the present is fallen and the future is in dire jeopardy of also falling unless something is done. That 'something', they suggest, is usually the return to or restoration of the values, identities and social roles that were reputed to exist in the 'Golden Age'. In so doing, the nostalgically produced 'Golden Age' does for us what myth does in non-state societies—it serves as a model for future action as well as an 'authentic' being-in-the-world, a source of inspiration, a sense of stability, continuity and self-worth.

In so doing, nostalgia, on both the individual and the collective levels, can have a distinctively utopian character—it provides us with cultural resources for imagining a better world, models of a more meaningful, authentic and heroic way of life, it allays our anxieties about our ability to effect a meaningful change in the world by reminding that either ourselves or our predecessors have done so in the past and it alleviates the terror of history by providing us with a secure sense of identity and continuity. Conversely, however, many of those utopian elements can also have quite harmful consequences. The nostalgic longing to return home, for example, continues to be the source of inter-ethnic tension in many of the world's 'hotspots'. Similarly, the call to 'return to family values' in North America has led not only to an anti-feminist backlash and the scapegoating of single mothers, in its extreme cases, it has led to the murder of doctors who perform abortions.

Another potentially harmful consequence of nostalgia comes from its ineluctable tendency towards ethnocentrism as a result of its tendency to read the past in a very selective manner. In nostalgic narratives, the present is almost always figured as being somehow fragmented while the Golden Age was one of peace and harmony. In the first few pages of Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (2000), for example, she laments the fracturing of the political and intellectual left by the rise of 'identity politics' and calls for a return to a left which is once again united in the war against capital. While this description of a previously united left is a wonderful tool for rallying the troops around a common banner and inspiring the kinds of collective actions which we have seen in Seattle (1999), Quebec (2001) and Genoa (2001), it produces this 'united left' through a radical oversimplification of a very complex history. As a result of this oversimplification of the past, the legitimate

concerns and actions of groups who have traditionally been marginalized even within the left (women, non-whites, gays) are once again written out of history and the concerns and actions of the typically white and male intellectual leadership of the left have been re-universalized as the concerns of the whole left. In other words, the harmony of the Golden Age is produced through acts of narrative cleansing of that past in which ethnic, gender and other conflicts are filtered out in favor of a vision of a united and homogenous whole. Pushed to its limit, this 'identity-thinking' characteristic can mutate into the most vicious of ethnocentrisms.

It is not difficult to list more potential pathologies of nostalgia. Its emphasis on authenticity, for example, can easily be used to reinforce cultural boundaries. For much of Canadian history, for example, being a 'real Canadian' meant to be a vitriolic anti-American. Similarly, in much of so-called 'critical communication studies', the nostalgic view of authenticity has led many researchers to pine for the 'good old days' of unmediated, face-to-face communication and to analyze each subsequent medium less on its own terms but as yet another distorting mirror which further removes us from the 'real'. In other words, the positing of the 'good old days when we walk among the gods and heroes' systematically disfigures the present *and* the past.

Like all utopias, therefore, the future-past imagined by nostalgia can have beneficial or harmful, if not deadly, consequences. In the face of this ambiguity, a question arises: What is the proper stance of the critic vis-à-vis nostalgia? Does one reject it outright or does one analyze it as somehow 'functional'? Like a good postmodernist, I'll give what will seem to many to be an unsatisfactory answer: both. I believe that in order to

fully understand nostalgia, one should, in Ricoeur's terms, view it as both pointing to a better life and as having potentially harmful effects as a result of its selective and backward-looking character. In fact, these two moments can often come from the same act of nostalgic remembrance. For example, the 'return to family values' has its utopian character in that it reasserts the responsibility of parents to provide emotional, intellectual and financial resources for their children even if this provision interferes with the parent's own projects of 'self-realization'. On the other hand, this ethic of sacrifice for the benefit of the next generation can have harmful effects when it leads to the attempt to formally or informally limit either parent's freedom to escape an abusive relationship.

The Critique of Nostalgia

It is clear from the above example that where one draws the line between the utopian and ideological or harmful elements of nostalgia depends very much upon one's general idea of 'the good life'. The fact that this is so should come as no surprise. As I argued earlier, nostalgic claims are concerned less about the past existence of a certain state of affairs than with the 'rightness' of certain courses of action or set of values in the present and future. Nostalgia, therefore, uses stories about the past to support normative claims about our present and future condition. This is not to say, however, that nostalgic claims are simply 'invented traditions'. As Anthony Smith explains: "to inspire wonder and emulation, the golden age must be well attested and historically verifiable" (Smith, 1997: 59). In other words, nostalgia produces what might be called a 'hybrid' speech act—it is at once a claim about what *did* happen and what *should* happen.

The critique of nostalgia, therefore, must operate on, at a minimum, the factual and the normative levels. As we have seen, as a framework for the telling of stories about the past, nostalgia figures the past as the Golden Age, the present as fallen and the future as bleak unless we return to our roots. On the factual level, the critique of nostalgia must draw upon the resources and motivations of what I described in the last chapter as 'critical history' in order to pay close attention to the way that these three temporal moments and the relationships between them are figured and/or disfigured. More specifically, of the nostalgic construction of any one of the past, present or future, we must ask ourselves what and who gets left out of the story, what and who is changed, what is celebrated and what is lamented, what is eternalized or essentialized and what is historicized.

In asking these questions, we are inevitably also engaging with the politics of the text because once we start looking at this process of selection, silencing and celebration of certain values, identities and social roles in nostalgia as implying both factual and normative claims, the critique of nostalgia becomes inevitably political. Nostalgic narratives, I have been arguing, attempt to recuperate some vision of the 'good life' which is assumed to be latent in our present in order to reconfigure some aspect of the lifeworld which is found wanting. As Chris Weedon and Glenn Jordan argue in Cultural Politics (1995), all attempts to define and institute some vision of the 'good life' involves relations of power in that they "*subject* us in that they offer us particular subject positions and modes of subjectivity" (Jordan & Weedon, 1995: 11). These subject positions, Weedon and Jordan argue, invariably involve relations of domination and subordination in which one group's vision of the true, the good and the beautiful is set up as the 'universal' model

or ideal beside which all competing visions pale. This ‘failure’ of these competing definitions is then used to justify further inequalities in wealth, social and political power, prestige and so on. In other words, the nostalgic redefinition of the past and tradition is an important weapon in the arsenal of contemporary cultural politics. For the critic of nostalgia, therefore, recognition of nostalgia’s centrality to contemporary cultural politics forces upon us the question of whose interests does this particular textual reconstruction of the past serve and whose memories and historical claims is it suppressing?

Addressing the Big Gap in the Literature on Nostalgia

In order to answer this question, I argue, we must supplement the literature on nostalgia with models for textual analysis drawn from the study of myth and literature. If there is a major hole in the literature on nostalgia, it is this: in their fervor to describe the psychological and sociological ‘functions’ of nostalgia, most of the writers on the subject completely neglect to describe the formal textual mechanisms by which an account of the past, present and future is stripped of all contradiction.

In the tradition of critical communication studies, Roland Barthes has probably been the most influential writer on the subject of the relationship between texts, myth and history. His book Mythologies was one of the earliest sustained intellectual engagements with popular culture and, in the words of John Storey, “represents the most significant attempt to bring the methodology of semiology to bear on popular culture” (Storey, 1993: 77). As we have seen, in that book, Barthes famously identified myth as a form of “depoliticized speech” in which the sign is voided of all reference to the contingent and arbitrary historical process by which it acquired a specific socially accepted meaning.

Instead, that meaning is 'naturalized' or 'essentialized'. As Barthes puts it: "Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification... In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it does away with all dialectics" (Barthes, 1998: 117).

In my view, there are two major problems with Barthes' account of myth. In the first place, while Barthes is quite right in pointing out that hegemony and would-be hegemony seek to halt what Derrida calls the play of signification in a manner that supports their self-serving definitions of social reality, it could just as easily be argued that the shift from the literal to the symbolic that he argues is constitutive of myth could be used to re-historicize and re-politicize speech. In parody, for example, acts of mythic signification are appropriated and reinserted into a different discursive context in order to reveal their political and historically situated character. In other words, the capacity of a given act of signification to act as a myth that supports the status quo has less to do with the structure of language itself than with the social context in which it takes place. Along with its structuralist tendency, the other major weakness of Barthes' approach stems from the fact that he situates myth at the level of the sign. This coheres with both a tendency in western modernity to define myth as an illusion and the Marxist tendency to define ideology (a term which Barthes uses interchangeably with myth in this work) as mystification since the sign is the basic unit of meaning (and thus illusion). The problem with this, it seems to me, is that it constitutes an overextension of the reference of the term 'myth' to the point that any sign can be read as a myth. While this overextension served

Barthes well in his analysis of the imagery and ideology of popular culture, it flies in the face of a well-established tendency in the fields of literary theory, anthropology and religious studies to identify myth as having a narrated or dramaturgical character. When one thinks, for example, of the myth of Prometheus, one does not think of an ideology but of a *story* of the Titan who give the gifts of fire and blind hope to humankind.

These criticisms of Barthes suggest that an adequate theory of myth demands a better recognition of the pragmatics of mythic signification and a recognition of the centrality of narrative to any understanding of myth. Within the structuralist tradition, Claude Lévi-Strauss began working in the direction of the latter insight. Unlike Barthes, Lévi-Strauss had little interest in the study of how a given myth operates in its socio-historical context. Instead, taking a page from Saussure's study of *langue*, he wanted to trace its invariant structures. In "The Structural Study of Myths" (orig. pub. date 1963), he begins by arguing that myth is a special form of language and, as a result, it is made up of constituent units. While it shares some units like phonemes with the rest of language, it also has its own distinct 'gross constituent units' that he calls 'mythemes'. In order to isolate mythemes, he suggest that the analyst breaks down a given mythic narrative into its most basic units of significance (he calls them functions) and then charts how the functions relate to one another. For example, in his rereading of the Oedipus myth, he isolates four mythemes: 1) the overrating of blood relations; 2) the underrating of blood relations; 3) the autochthonous origins of man; 4) the denial of autochthonous origins of man. He then discusses how these four mythemes relate to one another in order to provide a logical model of overcoming the contradiction between the opposition between the two latter

mythemes. Lévi-Strauss stresses the importance of making these connections: “The true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated but *bundles of such relations*, and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning” (Lévi-Strauss, 1998: 105).

As we see from the example above, Lévi-Strauss argued that the relationship between mythemes was generally binary and oppositional in character in order to maximize its cognitive potential for the overcoming of experiential contradictions and communicative potential for mass dissemination. As Will Wright explains in Six Guns and Society (1975): “myth depends on simple and recognizable meanings which reinforce rather than challenge social understanding. For this purpose, a structure of oppositions is necessary” (Wright, 1975: 23). Furthermore, this use of stark binary oppositions is typically accompanied by the frequent use of message redundancy. As Lévi-Strauss writes in his conclusion: “the question has often been raised why myths, and more generally, oral literature, are so much addicted to duplication, triplication, or quadruplication of the same sequence. If our hypotheses are accepted: the answer is obvious: the function of repetition is to render the structure of the myth apparent” (Lévi-Strauss, 1998: 114).

For a study such as this one, Lévi-Strauss’ insights on the repetitive and binary character of mythic narratives and his insistence on the need to break myths down into basic constituent units and to understand the relationship between those functions are very valuable. As we will see, in many of the Heritage Minutes, the complexity and contradictions of historical reality are often nostalgically reconfigured into simple binaries. Furthermore, this rhetorical simplification of history is supplemented by an extensive use

of message redundancy. In this way, Lévi-Strauss begins to offer us a critical vocabulary that comes to grip with another important aspect of myth identified by the 'mythographic' tradition: its repetitive and ritualistic character. Extrapolating his musings, one could argue that if the construction of subjects within a given social order requires the constant reiteration of those ideologies that support that order, the frequency of repetition could be used as an index of either the centrality accorded to a given subject position by the dominant ideological project and/or its sense that that position is particularly under threat in the ongoing struggle to define 'the tradition'. However, much of his more general project is of little use. As William Doty details, his structuralist account of myth has come under fire for a wide range of reasons ranging from his failure to situate myth in socio-historical contexts to his lack of concern with the manner in which myths are used by groups to understand their social and natural worlds and to provide cultural resources for identity construction (Doty, 2000: 282-3). These criticisms all stem from the fact that Lévi-Strauss was much less interested in the social role of myth than in trying to reveal how the binary character of myth mirrors the mind's structure.

As Will Wright argues, this analytic focus also led him to consistently downplay the role of the narrative as a whole in favour of a concern with the binary oppositions structuring the myth. Such a denial of the significance of the story, Wright asserts, is simply untenable. Each particular myth, he writes, "must be interpreted in some sense as an allegory of social action...in order to fully understand the social meaning of a myth, it is necessary to analyze not only its binary structure but its narrative structure—the progression of events and the resolution of conflicts." (Wright, 1975: 24). While I agree

with Wright that we need to attend to how the nostalgic figures the progression of events and the resolution of conflicts, I have been arguing all along that this is not enough. The critic of nostalgia is as concerned with what is not said as what is said—what is elided, reconfigured and displaced from the narrative.

Sigmund Freud's famous theory of the dream-work offers a theory of narrative that attends to formal mechanisms of how narratives are constructed by the suppression of 'disturbing' elements that has the potential to serve as a valuable model for the analysis of nostalgia. In The Interpretation of Dreams (1900), Freud made a three-fold distinction that would be put to use by later critics between the *manifest content* of the dream (the dream-content), its *latent content* (the dream-thoughts) and the *unconscious desire* articulated in the dream. When we dream, Freud argues, the manifest content is a translation of the latent content and the desires expressed in that latent content. According to Freud, the reason why the latent must undergo such a process of translation is that the latent content often contains unconscious thoughts, impulses or desires that would disturb the dreamer's psyche and, at best, cause her to wake up and, at worse, lead to neurosis. What Freud calls the *dream-work* is the work of making these unacceptable thoughts and desires acceptable by reconfiguring them. It is the analyst's job to uncover those thoughts and desires by decoding the dream-content.

In order to do so, Freud argues, she must pay close attention to the formal mechanisms by which this process of translation occurs. The first formal mechanism identified by Freud is that of *condensation*. He observes that while the transcription of the manifest content of the dream might fill half a page, the latent content might occupy up to

a dozen pages. Freud theorizes that a process of editing takes place in which many elements of the latent content are omitted and those latent elements that make their way into the manifest content are “combined and fused into a single unity in the manifest dream” (Freud, 1998: 100) by associating them according to some quality common to them. In creating such associations, Freud argues, potentially disturbing thoughts or desires are made comfortingly ambiguous.

Closely related to the work of condensation is that of *displacement*. Displacement, he argues, is entirely the work of dream-censorship and it manifests itself in two ways. First of all, a latent thought or desire is replaced not by a component part of itself but by something more remote—an allusion. In this way, the potentially disturbing dream-thought is made unintelligible and thus neutralized because, he writes, it becomes almost impossible to trace the chain of association between the manifest and the latent content. The second strategy of displacement shifts the psychic accent from a highly charged thought, desire or memory to one of little importance. In a paper titled “Screen Memories” (orig. pub. date 1899), Freud extended this example of dream-work to the work of memory as a whole by arguing that the psyche often produces what he calls *screen memories* to protect it from the disturbing effects of traumatic memories. Screen memories, he argues, substitute the memory of the trauma with one of a related event that is, on the whole, banal and insignificant. In this way, the psyche displaces those memories which are inherently unassimilable.

The third strategy of the dream-work uncovered by Freud was that of converting thoughts and desires into visual imagery. Visual images, he argues, comprise the essence

of the formation of dreams and thus of their semantically impoverished character. The conversion of thoughts into images, he argues, is a process by which semantically-rich thoughts are given a truncated and inexact expression in images because the latter have a difficult time conveying abstract ideas. Furthermore, he argues, the logical relationships between ideas are often obscured by imagery's inability to represent terms such as 'however' and 'therefore'. As Freud points, in making the conversion from thought to image, "the dream-work reduces the content of the dream-thoughts to its raw material of objects and activities" (Freud, 1998: 103). In order to make up for this reduction in message capacity, the dream-work resorts to a strategy that we have already seen: redundancy. As Freud explains: "When several dreams occur during the same night, they often have the same meaning and indicate that an attempt is being made to deal more and more efficiently with a stimulus of increasing insistence. In individual dreams, a particularly difficult element may be represented by several symbols—by doublets" (ibid.).

Freud calls the final strategy of the dream-work *secondary revision*. This is the attempt to make the text of the dream as a whole appear to the dreamer as being 'more or less coherent'. Such a process of revision, Freud explains, involves the rearrangement of the dream-content "in what is often a completely misleading sense and, where it seems necessary, interpolations are made in it" (Freud, 1998: 106). As Hayden White explains in his review of Freud's theory of dreams, this reconfiguration of the dream-content in secondary revision "presupposes a certain psychic distance from the dream experience, and moreover, a heightened psychic consciousness, an interplay of the sleeping and waking worlds, where the critical faculties of the dreamer are brought into play, and the

dream features are refashioned in the service of waking values as logical consistency, propriety, consistency, coherency and the rest” (White, 1999: 106).

From the point of view of the analyst of nostalgia and especially of the attempt to use the media of film and television to propagate nostalgic narratives, Freud’s discussion of the strategies of the dream-work is a veritable gold mine. If the events of the past occupy the role of the latent content and what gets celebrated in nostalgic narratives is the manifest content, Freud’s theory allows us to recognize the formal mechanism by which past events are translated into hegemonic ‘consensus narratives’. The strategies of condensation and displacement, for example, can be used to describe the process by which subaltern memories of victimhood at the hands of the would-be hegemonies are alternatively suppressed or ‘banalized’ in the production of mythhistories. Similarly, mythhistory’s emphasis on spectacular reenactments of the past through the production of ‘docudramas’ or the creation of heritage sites can be analyzed as a form of censorship from which the political and ethical meanings of the past and a sense of the relationship between the past and the present have been evacuated. Finally, the strategy of secondary revision can be applied to explain the attempts by the producers and supporters of those mythhistories to provide rationalizations and advance alibis for the editorial choices they made in the construction of the mythical narratives.

While Freud recognized the possibility of applying his terms of dream analysis to the study of myths—he described myths as “the age-long dreams of young humanity” (quoted in Doty, 2000: 164)—his work fails to provide us with a vocabulary to link these strategies of the dream- and myth-work with the social and political contexts in which

mythic and nostalgic narratives are produced. In A Theory of Literary Production (1978), Pierre Macherey tries to establish this connection. In that work, Macherey wears his indebtedness to Freud on his sleeve by arguing that the manifest content of a given literary narrative should be read as being the product of 'the not-said', a certain absence without which it would not exist. Lying behind every explicit verbal performance, he argues, "are other things *which must not be said*. Freud relegated this *absence of certain words* to a new place which he was the first to explore, and which he paradoxically *named*: the unconscious. To reach utterance, all speech envelops itself in the unspoken" (Macherey, 1978: 85). In other words, like Freud in his analysis of dreams, Macherey argues that the manifest content of a given narrative is structured by 'that which must not be said' or the unspoken which always remains latent. Furthermore, like Freud, he argues that the manifest content be read as an index of the not-said: "Speech eventually has nothing more to tell us: we investigate the silence, for it is the silence that is doing the speaking" (Macherey, 1978: 86).

As we have already seen, Freud believed that the unspoken was made up of the unconscious thoughts, drives, desires and memories which, if allowed free entry into consciousness, could seriously destabilize the psyche. As a result, Freud argued, the line between the unconscious and the conscious mind is patrolled by a internal censor that suppresses, neutralizes and/or distorts the unspoken by re-encoding it in various ways so as to minimize its anarchic and disturbing potential. For Macherey, on the other hand, history is the text's unconscious and the analyst works from its manifest content back to the historical contradictions that the text seeks to suppress, neutralize and distort. As he

explains, like the dream, the text is always manifests a tension between what it does say and what it does not want to say. This division, he writes

is *its* unconscious, in so far as it possesses one—the unconscious which is history, the play of history beyond its edges, encroaching on those edges: that is why it is possible to trace a path which leads from the haunted work to that which haunts it. Once again, it is not a question of redoubling the work with an unconscious, but a question of revealing in the very gestures of expression that which it is not. Then, the reverse side of what is written will be history itself. (Macherey, 1978: 95)

Given that Macherey argues, in a manner that echoes Eliade, that the text is an attempt to censor and control ‘the play of history’, his re-definition of ideology should come as no surprise. Following Althusser, he argues that, like Freud’s censor, ideology exists (in much the same way as nostalgia) in order to efface all traces of contradiction. As he writes in “Jules Verne: the Faulty Narrative”, the source of all ideology is “an attempt at *reconciliation*: also, by definition, ideology is in its way coherent, a coherence that is indefinite if not imprecise, which is not sustained by any real deduction” (Macherey, 1998: 144). Given its diffuse and indeterminate character, Macherey argues, it is futile to try to directly critique ideology—it can always be reconfigured to produce compelling alibis. Instead, he argues, if we want to expose its contradictions, we must examine how it is given fixed form in specific texts.

Any given text, he argues, can be analyzed on two main moments. First of all, there is the moment of the *representation* of the text’s ideological programme or project. In order for this moment to find expression in the text, it must undergo a secondary elaboration using processes similar to those described by Freud which will transform it into a literary object. This transposition from a set of ideological ideas or themes to a set

of literary devices and a general narrative corresponds to the second moment—that of *figuration*. As he explains, figuration “is something more than representation, since it is a question of devising, or at least collecting, the visible signs in which [Verne’s] important adventure can be read” (Macherey, 1998: 137). Macherey argues that in order to reveal the contradictions of ideology, we must examine the relationship between these moments in the text. As John Storey writes, Macherey believed that “there is a ‘gap’, an ‘internal distancing’, between what a text wants to say and what it actually says” (Storey, 1993: 115). In other words, Macherey believes that there is always a contradiction between the text’s ideological project and the textual figuration of that project. It is through the examination of this ‘gap’ that we can trace the text’s manifest content back to the text’s repressed unconscious. Macherey calls this approach ‘symptomatic reading’ because such gaps are symptoms of an underlying contradiction between ideology and history.

Conclusion

How does this discussion of symptomatic reading elucidate the problem of how to go about studying nostalgia? If we can accept nostalgia as a dominant contemporary form of myth, then we can see how nostalgia is akin to the outcome of Freud’s dream-work or Macherey’s figuration—a narrative or series of narratives that are the manifest end product of an ideological project to neutralize and/or repress history by re-encoding it in various distorted ways. Furthermore, the insights of Macherey and Freud link up nicely with those of writers more directly concerned with nostalgia. David Lowenthal, for example, suggest that we ask every nostalgic text what has been left out, upgraded and updated (Lowenthal, 1996). The critique of nostalgic texts, therefore, necessitates the

development of several knowledge clusters. First of all, it necessitates a general knowledge of the conflictual history that these nostalgic narratives are trying to repress or neutralize as well as the present day social and political terrain that is a product of that history. Secondly, it requires a knowledge of the ideological project whose selective and mythicized version of the collective past is figured within nostalgic narrative of the past. Finally, it demands a knowledge of the specific nostalgic texts and the ability to read the symptomatic 'gaps' in those texts to determine how history has been suppressed, reconfigured and revised in those texts. In developing these 'knowledge clusters', I argue, the critique of nostalgia links up with the strategies and resources of critical history. If we follow the provisional definition that I proposed of critical history in the first chapter as an attempt to re-historicize and re-politicize the past that nostalgic capital 'H' history seeks to essentialize and strip of any traces of past or present social contradictions, then the symptomatic reading of nostalgic texts for the gaps between the ideological project and its textual figuration seems to offer a fruitful method for accomplishing these ends.

Chapter 3: Historicism, Nation-Building and the Nostalgia for Memory

Introduction

In my first two chapters, I made the argument that a nostalgized version of history has come to supplement myth in western modernity as an important mechanism of securing social cohesion, averting legitimacy crises and constructing cultural boundaries and communal identities. In other words, through the telling of stories, members of groups become aware of their difference from other groups and that being part of their group demands of them the acceptance of a set of distinct beliefs and the performance of a set of culturally-specific actions and behaviours. Furthermore, they develop a conviction that their particular set of beliefs, institutions, rituals and practices are not simply different from but eminently superior to those of the constructed 'Others'. This sense of cultural distinctiveness and superiority has historically allowed cultural groups to legitimate aggression against their neighbours as part of their divinely-ordained mission, to console themselves for the current state of weakness, to strictly police their cultural boundaries, to engage in 'ethnic cleansing' and so on.

Furthermore, I argued in the last chapter that in order to effectively critique such nostalgized representations of the past, we have to develop, among other things, a strong understanding of the ideological program that underwrites the impulse to create such representations. In this chapter, I will begin to develop such an understanding by tracing the act of writing national histories back to its roots in the development of the modern nation-state in the late 18th and early 19th century Europe. I will then discuss the role of capital 'H' history in the development of nationalism in Canada

History as a National Pedagogy

Prior to the American and French Revolutions, mythic narratives would have circulated in small-scale 'regional' and/or 'tribal' communities or in the larger-scale 'transnational' communities created by the major world religions and would have acted to make the world and their place and role in the world meaningful for the members of those communities. However, as a result of a constellation of historical processes ranging from the rise of capitalism to colonialism, the centralization of the modern state, the Industrial Revolution, mass literacy, the Enlightenment's attack on religion and traditional popular culture and so on, these forms of affiliation began to break down. The result, as Durkheim and his followers have long since pointed out, was a state of anomie and social unrest in which the cognitive scripts that had traditionally guided most people no longer could be deployed. As Zygmunt Bauman explains, stripped of the stories that gave their world form, meaning and order, "the people found themselves indeed naked and helpless, lacking the skills and communal support to meet the challenge of life and reproduce the conditions of their survival" (Bauman, 1987: 68). In this volatile situation, post-Revolutionary thinkers latched onto the idea of 'education' as a means of restoring social equilibrium. This renewed emphasis upon 'education' was, Bauman argues, "a response of the 'crisis-management' type, a desperate attempt to regulate the deregulated, to introduce social order into social reality which had first been dispossessed of its own self-ordering devices" (Bauman, 1987: 69).

While all cultures have historically sought to teach their young their distinct practices and beliefs and most have developed designated educational institutions for the

young members of the elite of their societies, what was new about this crisis-induced response was its centralizing ambition. At a time when the formal education of the elite would have been in the hands of unregulated private schools and the informal education of the non-elite would have occurred in a decentralized and disorganized way (through a combination of parents and kin, village elders, local priests and missionaries, the pulp press and so on), demands were being voiced for a state-run and universal educational system. For the proponents of such a view, Bauman writes, “The idea of education stood for the right and the duty of the state to form (best conveyed in the German concept of *Bildung*) its citizens and guide their conduct...” (Bauman, *ibid.*) In other words, to fill the void created by the destruction of the traditional story-world of pre-modern Europe, the state would have to step in and provide a whole new set of stories which could reintroduce identity, form, meaning and order in the vortex of massive historical change.

We can see this belief in the state’s role in (re)creating cultural identities at work in one of the founding texts of nationalism. J.G. Fichte’s Addresses to the German Nation (1807) were written in December 1807 in the immediate aftermath of Prussia’s resounding military defeats at the hands of Napoleon in the battles of Jena and Auerstedt and Prussia’s subsequent forced renunciation of all its lands west of the Elbe and most of Poland. In the writings of Fichte, post-Jena Prussia is figured as fragmented: its body politic is fractured by centrifugal tendencies that put its future existence into question. Like Canadian federalists castigating ‘regional interests’, Fichte argued that self-seeking on the part of its component members weakened the Prussian national fabric to the point that “the commonwealth collapses at the first serious attack which is made upon it... so now its

members, who are restrained by no fear of it, and are spurred on by the greater fear of a foreign power, cut themselves off from it...and go each his own way” (Fichte, 1968: 7). Furthermore, the modernization process exacerbated this centripetal tendency. As a result of the Enlightenment critique of tradition and religion and its stress on ‘purely material calculations’, he argues, ‘the interest of the individual in the community which was linked to his interest in himself by ties which at some point were so completely severed that his interest in the community absolutely ceased’ (Fichte, 1968: 8-9).

In order to counteract this process of national disintegration, Fichte turns to education. Given the German nation’s deplorable and fragmented state, he argues, the only means of salvation at its disposal is not military reconquest but cultural reformation. Such a process of reformation, he writes, “consists in the fashioning of an entirely new self, which may have existed before perhaps in individuals as an exception, but never as a universal and national self, and in the education of the nation...to a completely new life...In a word, it is a total change of the existing system of education that I propose as the sole means of preserving the existence of the German nation.” (Fichte, 1968: 10-11).

Fichte’s proposed plan for the reformation of the self and nation was predicated upon the faith in the infinite malleability of the ‘average person’ to the culturing activities of the writing elite. Older attempts at education, Fichte argues, were marred by their “recognition of, and reliance upon, free will in the pupil” (Fichte, 1968: 17). The problem with such a strategy was that those who believed that they have the freedom of choice had the unfortunate tendency to make what Fichte would consider the wrong choices (self over nation). His new plan of education, on the other hand, will be a great improvement

because “it completely destroys freedom of the will in the soil which it undertakes to cultivate, and produces on the contrary strict necessity in the decisions of the will... Such a will can henceforth be relied on with confidence and certainty” (Fichte, 1968: 17). Along with this new self’s steadfast will comes a self-abnegating morality that prizes the good of the nation for its own sake (as opposed to liberal conceptions in which the individual seeks the good of the nation only to satisfy her own desires or out of fear of punishment). As he explains: “We are compelled by necessity to wish to mold men who are inwardly and fundamentally good, since it is through such men alone that the German nation can still continue to exist...” (Fichte, 1968: 19). In other words, having ‘freed’ the people by expelling them from the comforting necessity of the world of tradition, Fichte is arguing that the writing classes must now re-fetter that freedom by reintroducing a new kind of necessity: the love of the nation and the desire to cede to its will.

Fichte argued that Germany had previously failed to produce such stalwart and selfless citizens as a result of bad education. Existing educational methods, he argued, failed to inculcate in their students “some sort of picture of a religious, moral, and law-abiding disposition and order in all things and good habits” (Fichte, 1968: 11). This failure was the product of the fact that the rote-style teaching methods prevented the students from forming any sustained emotional attachment with their subject matter. All it did, he argued, was “to fill the memory with some words and phrases and the cold and indifferent imagination with some faint and feeble pictures” (Fichte, 1968: 11). As a result, he concludes, “has never succeeded in making its picture of a moral world-order so vivid that

its pupil was filled with passionate love and yearning for that order, and with such glowing emotion as to stimulate him to realize it in his life” (Fichte, 1968: 11).

For Fichte, the study of German history, if done properly, would play a central role in filling young German minds with the ‘passionate love and yearning’ for the German moral order. As Frank Furedi explains, in making this argument, Fichte initiates an enduring relationship between nationalism, history and education. As Furedi writes, nationalists “have long placed great emphasis on history education. They regard it as providing vital moral instruction and as helping to forge a sense of national identity in the face of disintegrative trends or subversive influences”(Furedi, 1992: 19). In the case of Fichte, he argued that the narrative of Germany’s special historical mission can serve as a catalyst for the rejuvenation of the ‘German spirit’. He writes that “Of the separate and special means of once more raising the German spirit, a very powerful one would be in our hands if we had a soul-stirring history of the Germans...one that would become a book for the nation and the people, just as the Bible and the hymn book are now” (Fichte, 1968: 90). Such a book, he argues, can only have such a catalyzing effect if its author abjures the traditional idiom of the learned scholar and write in an accessible manner that would bring history alive to all Germans. Fichte writes that such a popularized history

should not set forth deeds and events after the fashion of a chronicle; it should transport us by its fascinating power, without any effort or clear consciousness on our part, into the very midst of the life of that time, so that we ourselves should seem to be walking and standing and deciding and acting with them...Such a work, indeed, could only be the fruits of extensive knowledge and of investigations that have, perhaps, not yet been made; but the author should spare us the exhibition of this knowledge and these investigations and simply lay the ripened fruit before us in the language of the present day and in a manner that every German without exception could understand. (Fichte, 1968: 90-91)

In other words, Fichte seems to be arguing that a national scheme of citizenship education must make use of the past but only a very special past. Historical accounts that make explicit reference to the historian's process of collecting historical data, reading background material, testing hypotheses and that use specialized academic language are rejected as suitable candidates for the construction of a German national memory. Instead, the narrator must take on the narrative position of the family patriarch or the village elder who tells the story of the collective past as though he is simply passing down traditional wisdom about the national 'tribe' or 'family' or exemplary tales of the exploits of national heroes. That is to say, every attempt must be made to conceal the 'constructed' nature of that past so that the nation, the form of collective identification that it describes and prescribes, appears 'timeless', 'traditional' and 'natural'. Furthermore, as we saw in our discussion of the heritage industry, such an approach to the communication of the past 'Disneyfies' history by seeking to eradicate any sense of the difference between the past and the present through what Fichte describes as its power to 'transport us by its fascinating power'. In so doing, to use David Lowenthal's terms, erudition gives way to catechism, understanding gives way to desire. In producing such a catechistic history, the nation can replace prior forms of communal identification as the locus of ontological security and identity in the modern world. Nationalism thus aspires to replace religion.

Historicism, Nationalism and the Rise of the Historical Profession

In equating the nation with identity, stability and continuity over time, Fichte is situating himself in the historicist tradition of thought. Historicism emerged in the late 18th century as an intellectual reaction against the French Revolution and the Enlightenment

ideals of universality and individualism that seemed to provoke its worst excesses. More specifically, historicists rejected the view that each individual, no matter where they were from and when they were born, possessed a bundle of timeless personal attributes, abilities, rights and so on which they ultimately shared with all other individuals and that any differences between individuals were ultimately superficial and could be easily overcome through a process of 'ideology critique'. Instead, they believed that cultural identities and individual personalities were the products of historically specific and unpredictable patterns of development.

Johann Herder is generally credited as being the founding figure of this movement and his thought is typically described as historicism's first phase. Herder believed that history was in a state of constant flux but that "within the flux of history, there are at least certain centers with at least relative stability: the nations." (Iggers, 1968: 35). He was a cosmopolitan at heart: he believed that all nations were equally sacred and worked together to contribute to the texture of a shared global civilization. He was also vehemently anti-statist. Like many cultural nationalists, he believed that the 'national genius' was a product of the nation's writers, musicians, artists and folk performers and that the state was an artificial invention which tended to hinder rather than help the development of that genius.

The second phase of historicism developed among German intellectuals in the wake of the French Revolution. In its early phases, many German intellectuals were wildly supportive of the Revolution. However, by the time it entered into its terroristic phase and then gave birth to Napoleon's adventures, they had lost their taste for the Revolution and

the ideals upon which it was built. As George Iggers notes, their post-Revolutionary disappointment was manifested in their revision of Herder's ideas. Like Herder, they rejected Enlightenment universality in favour of the view that all ideas, identities, rights, institutions and values were of national and historic origin and could and should not be transferred from one nation to another. Unlike Herder, this assertion of historical and cultural difference became an assertion of historical and cultural superiority. Fichte's Addresses, for example, are replete with references to the decadence of the French and the salutary spiritual and intellectual condition of the Germans. Finally, as is most evident in the writings of Hegel, the meaning of the state changes. Whereas Herder argued that 'civil society' was the vehicle of the national genius, with Fichte, Hegel, Humboldt and others, the state takes on the role of the moral and religious educator of the people. Furthermore, the interests and activities of the state come to be seen as superseding those of the individuals who comprise it. In this Hegelian view, "in following its interests, the state acts not only in accordance with a higher morality than that represented by private morality, but also in harmony with the basic purpose of history" (Iggers, 1968: 42).

The insistence of Herder and his subsequent interpreters that the identities of cultures and individuals develop as the result of endogenous historical processes rather than as the gradual manifestation of universal human attributes spurred a renewed interest in the study of history. This was a major cultural shift. As Karl Löwith explains in Meaning and History (1949), the emergence of the modern view that the passage of time could itself have a determining effect on the character of human reality required a major break with both Christian and classical traditions of thought. Whereas classical thought

believed that human nature and history imitate the nature of the cosmos and that the study of history could only reveal timeless human truths and moral/political lessons, Christian thought held that history is always already a realm of sin and death which can only be redeemed by Christ's return. Within such perspectives, Löwith argues, "the historical process as such could not be experienced as all-important. The belief in the absolute relevance of history as such... is the result of the emancipation of the modern historical consciousness from the foundation in and limitation by classical cosmology and Christian theology. Both restrained the experience of history and prevented its growing into indefinite dimensions." (Löwith, 1949: 192-93).

The first important break with the classical and Christian notions of history occurred during the Enlightenment with the rise of the doctrine of Progress. In contrast to the classical and Christian views which tended to view human history as an 'eternal repetition of the Same' or a meaningless catalogue of sins, the rise of the doctrine of Progress endowed history with a new dynamic and productive character. The idea of progress was, at its root, a secularization of the Christian sacred history and carried over from the Christian tradition three main attitudes: dualism, eschatology and cosmopolitanism (Barnes, 1963). While Christianity ordered the universe along the lines of good and evil, the Enlightenment split the world into the forces of reason and those of unreason. The Christian vision of history culminating in humanity's spiritual redemption was transmuted into a vision of humanity's increasing ability to achieve 'heaven on earth' through its growing ability to predict and control the natural and social worlds. Finally, both Christianity and the Enlightenment saw their versions of 'the good news' as

transcending national, racial and ethnic boundaries. As Herbert Butterfield explains in The Origins of History (1981), this new sense of history's dynamism fostered a new interest in the study of history. The idea of progress, he argues, "made it possible for men to give shape and structure to the whole course of the ages. It was no longer one generation succeeding another on the same unchanging stage... With the idea of progress... it comes to be accepted that the long train of centuries has a meaning because it is producing something. Time itself is in fact a generative thing" (Butterfield, 1981: 214-15).

At the end of the eighteenth century, there was a strong intellectual reaction to this Enlightenment eschatology. Herder, as we have seen, led the charge by rejecting the Enlightenment's universalism. While he remained cosmopolitan in his insistence that all cultures are inherently valuable, he asserted that their value stemmed from their different patterns of development rather than in their shared movement towards a common end. In anticipation of the rhetoric of multiculturalism, he described their differences and particularities as working together to create a 'mosaic'. This emphasis upon the value of 'difference' and 'particularity' caused a renewed interest in finding and celebrating those ideas, institutions and practices that differentiate 'our' nation from the 'Others'. As a result, the study of language, folklore, mythology and history became elevated above that of science and philosophy.

This post-Revolutionary rejection of universalism also strongly impacted the nature of the two other carry-overs from Christianity: dualism and eschatology. As we have already seen, as historicism developed after Herder, his cosmopolitanism gave way to a parochialism in which the nation being defended by a given writer was seen as not just

different from, but superior to, other nations. This gave the histories being produced a bellicose character. While the Enlightenment waged war against 'unreason' in the name of universal emancipation, historicists sought to rally the people around a nation besieged by 'Others'. Individual nations were typically portrayed as being at risk of losing their 'national genius', their 'national identity' or even their territory if they continued to allow foreign ideas, practices and institutions to influence them. Instead, they were urged to rediscover their native 'roots' and place their faith in the instrument of their collective destiny: the state. In so doing, they would collectively emerge out of this perilous situation to assume their historically ordained status as the greatest of all nations. In this manner, the Enlightenment metanarrative of universal human emancipation as a result of the defeat of unreason by reason became the nationalist metanarrative of national glory stemming from the victory of the 'national genius' over foreign ideas and peoples.

At the same time that historicism was coming into its own, so too were two other fixtures on modernity's map: the modern nation-state and the historical profession. As we have seen, historicism provided a great stimulus to the study of national history by emphasizing the dynamic and genetic character of time, the relative stability of the nation and the 'national genius' within the flux of time and the singularity of each nation's development. Similarly, historicism also provided a great stimulus to the emerging nation-state's drive to supplant the 'transnational' affective loyalties of religion and Enlightenment universalism and the 'local' loyalties to region, town and kin with the loyalty to the nation. In the historicist reading of the world, all of these former sources of communal identity are subject to decline and decay. The nation and only the nation can act

as a stable source of communal identity. As a result, the architects of the modern nation-state were quick to seize upon the legitimacy possibilities offered by the expansion of the historical profession along historicist lines. As Margaret Mehl explains in History and State in Nineteenth Century Japan (1998):

Historicism and the professionalization of history which it promoted, evolved at the same time as the modern nation state... History served to define national identity by using the past to guide the present and future. In this function, historical scholarship was only one aspect of using tradition, whether discovered, invented, reinvented or otherwise, to legitimize the nation and to represent it to its citizens. The nation was a recent construct, it was moreover too large a community to be tangible to the individual and needed symbols to represent it. Tradition linked the past, the present and the future, providing continuity, and was shared by the members of the nation, providing community. (Mehl, 1998: 5)

While, as the editors of Writing National Histories (1999) suggest, “Historical writing has been connected to the process of nation-building across Europe ever since the concept of the modern nation was first formulated in the American and the French Revolutions of the late eighteenth-century” (Berger et al., 1999: 3), the case of early nineteenth century Prussia is particularly illustrative of the close relationship between historicism, historiography and nation-building. Histories of this period argue that while writers like Herder and Fichte laid the intellectual groundwork for the rise of the Prussian historical profession, its main impetus came from the Baron von Stein, a Prussian statesman and reformer. Like many members of the Prussian elite, Stein was strongly francophobic and wished to extend Prussian political and cultural hegemony over all of Germany. In order to secure these ends, Stein busied himself with the creation of the infrastructure necessary for the development of a national historiography. First of all, he convinced the Prussian state to sponsor a massive archival endeavour which culminated in

the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, a collection of sources of German history which has been described as marking “the transition of German historiography from particularist or cosmopolitan to national; it was the chief product of the sentiment of nationalism” (Snyder, 1969: 125). Along with his patronage of the *Monumenta*, Stein played a leading role in the development of a national historical association and ushered in a series of educational reforms in Prussia which culminated in the development of a free and obligatory public school system and the creation of the University of Berlin where many of the great German nationalist historians—Niebuhr, Ranke, Treitschke and others—held chairs in history. Through all of these endeavours, he was convinced of the value of history as a means of creating national loyalty. Furthermore, he also believed that this task should not be left up to ‘civil society’: “I have been animated by my wish to awaken the taste for German history, to facilitate the fundamental study of it, and so to contribute to keep alive a love of our common country and for the memory of our great ancestors...this, however, depends upon measures taken by the Government and cannot be accomplished by the determination of individuals” (quoted in Guillard, 1915: 25).

The alliance between the state and the historical profession suggested by this brief look at the career of Baron von Stein has generally been beneficial for both parties. Anthony Smith argues that in forming a strategic alliance with the state, the strata of humanist intellectuals is the class fraction which tends to benefit the most from the valorization, construction and proliferation of nationalist ‘mythhistories’. Through the act of helping to secure national cohesion by reconstructing the past in a manner that allows members of the nation to identify with a shared glorious heritage, to recognize their

special historical mission and to discern common enemies, the intellectual also reduces her anxiety about her social position and slakes her ambition. As Smith explains, the author of 'the national history' "is no longer an ambiguous 'marginal' on the fringes of society, but a leader in the advancing column of the reawakened nation, the leaven in the movement of national regeneration... In this way, the intellectual leaves his study to enter upon a new social role as national pedagogue and artist" (Smith, 1999: 84-5). However, as Kevin Passmore et al. point out, the ability of the historian to assume that role, however, lies less in her ability to convince the 'people' that they need to know their shared past than in her ability to convince the ruling class that the people need to know the national history. In other words, when historians periodically raise concerns about the public's lack of historical knowledge, it is as much a defense of their own professional interests and a justification of their existence as anything else (Passmore et al., 1999).

For the state, this alliance has been equally fruitful. Through the construction of national histories, the nation has been confirmed and reconfirmed as the primary and most stable site of belonging in the modern world. Furthermore, the historicist emphasis on the historical specificity of each nation's developmental process has placed an emphasis on how a given historian's nation is both different from and superior to neighbouring states. This specification and constant reiteration of a delimited stock of national memories, values, beliefs, institutions and practices facilitates communication and collective action within the nation and hinders the development of extra-national social relationships. Finally and perhaps most importantly, as Shari Cohen suggests in Politics Without a Past (1999), history "has a key role in *modern* national ideologies because it is the main secular

substitute for religious systems of meaning...nationalism substitutes common history for divine origin as a source of uniqueness...in all modern nationalisms, historians, rather than priests or figures with magical powers, are the source of ideas about history...nationalist ideologies use historians as the creators and guardians of a history to sustain a national myth” (Cohen, 1999: 29).

History and Nation Building in 19th Century Canada

While the use of history to produce nationalism seems to have had its origins in Europe, it soon spread to nascent nation-states all over the globe. As Benedict Anderson argues in Imagined Communities, this was especially the case in the newly independent North and South American states of the nineteenth century. While continental nationalists could often rely upon ethnic ties, shared folkways and a common language along with a national history to sharpen the boundary-consciousness of their intended audiences, this was much more difficult in the American context. Most of the American states were hybrid spaces which brought together indigenous populations, settlers from all over Europe, formerly African slaves and ex-slaves, indentured labourers from the Indian subcontinent and the Asian Pacific Rim and significant creole or *mestizo* populations coexisted in a complex and often volatile mix. As a result, while appeals to ethnic ties, a shared language or common customs could reinforce the solidarity of one group against all others within the new state, it could not rally the whole population around the flag. Furthermore, an appeal to ‘timeless’ shared characteristics would downplay the one event in which the collective energies of all (or most) of the nation’s members were united: the achievement of independence. As Anderson notes, in such a situation, the solution to the

problem of creating national solidarity seemingly *ex nihilo* “was found in History, or rather History emplotted in particular ways.” (Anderson, 1991: 197).

One can see the attempt to create a national consensus through the construction of particular readings of history at work in nineteenth century Canada. As Maurice Lemire and his associates document in the second volume of La Vie Littéraire au Québec (1992), the most influential history of pre- and post-Conquest Canada written before 1840, A History of Canada, was composed by the younger William Smith, a member of the inner circle of the English colonial elite. As Lemire et al. explain, this circle “fortement imbu de la supériorité britannique, s’épuise en stratégies pour amener les Canadiens à accepter l’anglicisation comme moyen de secouer leur ‘ignorance’. C’est dans cet esprit que Smith fils rédige son histoire” (Lemire et al., 1992: 271). Given this political orientation, it comes as no surprise that Smith’s narrative of the French régime was a story of tyrannical, corrupt and incompetent bureaucrats, power-hungry missionaries, anarchic *coureurs de bois*, military atrocities and flagrant violations of international law. When the régime was finally put to a merciful end by the brave and just Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, it was “the happiest eventuality which could have happened to the *canadiens*” (Lemire, 1992: 275, my translation). However, their continued ‘irrational’ clinging to the French language, Catholicism, the *code civile* and other traditions prevented them from reaping the full benefits of these ‘good tidings’ in post-Conquest Quebec. Only once they assimilated themselves to a ‘modern, English lifestyle’ could they be fully liberated.

Until 1840, Smith’s interpretation of the history of Canada dominated the colony’s nascent public culture and had the often-grudging support of both English and French

writers. Even when Michel Bibaud set out to write a history which contested many of Smith's interpretations, for example he found himself unable to adequately refute Smith and, as a result, "he resigned himself to accept a version of the facts which often repulsed him" (Lemire, 1992: 292, my translation). However, countervailing forces were mustering. As Lemire recounts, members of the francophone intellectual elite began to argue that Smith's 'unacceptable' interpretation of their collective past "had to be replaced by another founded on new documents that would permit the refutation of the allegations of the anglophone historians. It is this imperative which mobilized a whole group of researchers who rifled through archives, copied documents, drew up bibliographies and organized book collections" (Lemire, 1992: *ibid.*, my translation.).

As was the case in Germany where Baron von Stein's *Monumenta* laid the groundwork for the development of a national historiography, these researchers and archivists opened the path for the production of what is perhaps the founding text of Québécois nationalism: François-Xavier Garneau's Histoire du Canada Depuis Sa Découverte Jusqu'à Nos Jours (1859). As legend has it, stung by Durham's characterization of the *canadiens* as 'a people without history or literature', Garneau undertook the writing of this history to refute the British nobleman. Like many of his generation who were profoundly influenced by historicism and romanticism, Garneau wrote his histories as a means of instilling pride in his 'nation' by establishing the providential mission of the French in North America and celebrating their heroism, moral superiority and fierce commitment to survival in the face of the vicissitudes of history. His basic narrative framework was as follows: in spite of metropolitan neglect and absolutist

institutions during the French regime and pressures for assimilation in post-Conquest period, the *canadiens* have consistently revealed themselves to manifest an uncommon courage, determination and canniness in their attempts to overcome all sorts of obstacles on their road to self-recognition and (eventual) self-determination. In other words, in response to Smith's depiction of the *canadiens* as essentially 'lazy, backward and priest-ridden' and the English as the spirit of enterprise, liberty and progress, Garneau appropriated Smith's liberal virtues and used them to reconfigure the *canadien* as enterprising, courageous, resilient and resourceful.

From within the *canadien* intellectual elite, the reaction to Garneau's work was almost immediate. Among its more liberal and secular members, it was described as 'revelation' and 'tearing away of the veils of illusion' which had hidden the glorious exploits of their ancestors from them. Among its more conservative and clerical members, it was criticized for its liberal assumptions and the anti-clerical tone of some of its passages. So incensed were some of these conservatives that they were driven to write their own histories. The Abbé Ferland, for example, composed his Cours d'Histoire du Canada in 1861 with the express purpose of proving that Catholicism and French-Canadian nationalism were indissolubly linked to one another. While such debates between conservative and liberal nationalists and their contemporary variants continue to rage, the important point for our purposes is that the link between nationalism(s) and historiography was firmly established in Quebec by the time Confederation rolled around.

The situation was similar in what is now Ontario. As Carl Berger in The Sense of Power (1970) and Norman Knowles in Inventing the Loyalists (1997) both argue, part of

the more general project of state formation in 19th century Ontario was the construction of an 'imagined community' through the invention of the Loyalist myth. As Knowles details, the production of this myth was heavily subsidized and authorized by the nascent state. Canadian legislators, he writes, "recognized the importance of the past in constructing community and a shared identity and actively supported the production of literary and historical works" (Knowles, 1997: 28). This support included the provision of parliamentary grants for the publication of historical texts (a practice which began in 1842) to writers such as John Richardson, François Garneau and l'Abbé Ferland as well as the creation of an expanded market for such texts through the development of a public school system and the encouragement of mass literacy, both of which greatly facilitated the movement of ideas from the centre to the margins of the new society.

Carl Berger argues that, like the myth of *la survivance*, the nostalgic character of the Loyalist myth made it the perfect nationalist vehicle. As the story goes, the Loyalists were refugees from the American Revolution who, out of loyalty to the British crown, left opulent manors in the American colonies to start again in the Canadian wilderness. These refugees would go on to form the backbone of the province's military defense against subsequent American aggression and worked tirelessly and courageously to create a prosperous, moral and orderly society on the north shores of Lake Ontario. As in the myth of *la survivance canadienne*, Berger argues, this myth of the loyalist tradition

was romantic in outlook, backward looking in orientation and shot through with nostalgia. Both of these Canadian traditions centred on defeat and both sought to assuage the memory of conquest or disaster by invoking the images of some golden age in the past, by exalting principles for which the ancestors had fought, and by glorifying the subsequent adherence to those principles and attitudes which were the foundations of nationalism. Defeat

was traced to circumstances external to those principles. Defeat in no way affected their validity; indeed, it seemed but a purging, a preparation for their final triumph. (Berger, 1970: 90)

English Canadian Nationalism and the Discourse of the Memory-Crisis

While Berger's description of the nostalgic character of these nationalist myths seems to further confirm our existing suspicions about the close relationship between memory, nationalism and nostalgia, Knowles' research suggests another important facet of this relationship. The call to arms for the production of such nostalgic narratives often comes from the public articulation of what I will call the 'discourse of the memory-crisis'.

In his book, Knowles cites a characteristic example of this discourse:

'No people,' the Toronto *Globe* observed in October of 1856, 'has made a figure in the life of nations, without its heroes.' Fortunately, Upper Canada could claim heroic foundations. 'United Empire Loyalists,' the *Globe* asserted, 'form an ancestry which go to constitute an enduring substratum for a coming nation.' It was a matter of considerable concern to the *Globe*, however, that Upper Canadians displayed a decided 'ignorance' and 'indifference' towards the province's 'Loyalist Fathers.' 'No ignorance of history,' the *Globe* warned, 'can be more reprehensible than that which we now censure. It amounts to an utter obliviousness of our particular story... Something must be done,' the *Globe* concluded, 'in justice alike to the past, and to coming generations'. (Knowles, 1997: 26)

In the above citation, the *Globe*'s editorial follows the traditional sequence of 'the discourse of the memory-crisis'. It begins with the traditional assertion of the ignorance of 'the people' about their glorious shared past and voices an anxiety about the impending loss of that memory. It then proceeds to the next step: the assignation of blame. In this discourse, the value of the memories whose potential loss is being lamented is always absolute. The validity of the story being commemorated or the salience of that story to the lives of its intended audience is never questioned. The memory-crisis is always the product

of some combination of the failure of some members of the imagined community or amnesiac forces imposed upon the community by outside forces. In the above instance, for example, blame for the memory-crisis is placed squarely on the shoulders of 'the people'. The editorial suggests that like spoiled and disobedient children, they display a willful ignorance and indifference to the deeds, sacrifices and wisdom of their fathers. Once the crisis has been declared and blame has been assigned, description of the glorious past and the fallen present inevitably gives way to prescription for the future. As the above quote reveals, this discourse holds that in order for the community to preserve its past and secure the future, 'something must be done'.

As the observant reader will no doubt have noted, the discourse of the memory-crisis is, in its essence, a nostalgia for memory. That is to say, it carves up the past, present and future along nostalgic lines. The past is constructed as a golden age in which heroic acts were routinely performed but also where the words and actions of members of the nation were directly inspired by their near-photographic memory of those acts. The present, on the other hand, is fallen. As a result of the nation having turned its back on its own glorious past, a state of anomie has come into existence and the nation's once-secure collective future seems to be in doubt. However, there is always hope. The nation can be regenerated if it abandons those things that deflect and scatter its attention and refocusses on its creative life-principle—its shared past. The description of the memory-crisis, therefore, inevitably has its terminal point in the demand for a renewed and re-energized public pedagogy on the nation's past.

In the Canadian context, the discourse of the memory crisis has recurrently taken a prominent position on the public stage (Osborne, 2000). While the narrative framework of rise-fall-rebirth that it tells tends to remain the same, the catalogue of the forces of amnesia has mushroomed over the decades. While the *Globe* editorial from 1856 was content to castigate the ‘people’ for their indifference and disobedience, other villains began to emerge over time. In 1892, for example, regionalist factions were also being held responsible for the lamentable state of the Canadian collective memory. In his presidential address to the Dominion Education Association, George Ross (Ontario’s minister of education) followed a lament for the nation’s memory with an entreaty: “I have perused with great care the various histories in use in all the provinces of this Dominion, and I have found them all to be merely provincial histories, without reference to our common country... Can’t we agree upon certain broad features common to the whole of this Dominion with which we can indoctrinate our pupils, so that when a child takes up the history of Canada, he feels that he is... taking up the history of a great country” (quoted in Laloux-Jain, 1974: 83).

By the early twentieth century, the federal government was also being held responsible for the Canadian memory-crisis. In a 1905 address to the Canadian Club, the historian Charles Colby voiced a familiar refrain: “In Canada we certainly have a history which is worth honoring, and the great pity is that we have done so little to exploit it” (Colby, 1905: 11). For Colby, the exploitation of Canadian history for the purposes of fostering patriotism requires the federal government’s investment in a memorial infrastructure. First of all, he argues, the national archives must be greatly expanded

through a large infusion of funds. In 1905, he argued, \$12000 were spent on the Canadian national archives while the state of Wisconsin invested \$ 45000 on developing its archival holdings. Secondly, if Canada had the most complete archival holdings in the West, there would only be a very limited market for the histories as the result of the fact that “In this country we spend nothing on national education” (Colby, 1905: 114).

By 1927, a new enemy appeared on the memorial nationalist radar: the pedant. In a report entitled ‘Canadian Cultural Development’ presented at the Canadian Historical Association’s Annual Meeting in 1927, J.C. Webster begins his section on ‘Historical Instruction’ with the standard description of the appalling ‘ignorance of our people’ and the standard warning that without a sense of history, “there can be no hope of building up a strong nation” (Webster, 1927: 77). While educational bureaucrats take some of the blame for this situation, Webster also takes aim at the messenger. Like Fichte complaining about extant German history textbooks, Webster argues that the Canadian history taught in schools, he writes, “is to most pupils a dreary mass of dates and disconnected facts... Our ordinary textbooks are partly to blame for they are as a rule written by uninspired and unimaginative writers” (Webster, 1927: 77-78). In order to combat the tedium of these monotonous works, Webster suggests the increased use of ‘multimedia’ teaching aids such as wall-charts, engravings, prints and slides. Such a ‘spectacular’ approach to history is bound to be more successful, Webster argues, since “The great majority of our common school children are to become ordinary citizens. For them elaborate constitutional, economic and sociologic presentation is useless. Outline sketches

of the main course of our history with special reference to the most prominent personages and events are sufficient..." (Webster, 1927: 78).

Hilda Neatby's report on "National History" for the 1951 Massey Commission expands on many of the themes that we have already seen and adds several new important themes. She argues that the 'indifference tempered by distaste' which Canadians feel for their collective history is the product not just of regional and linguistic divisions, bungling provincial educational bureaucracies, the failure of the federal government to adequately fund the infrastructures of 'memory', bad textbooks but several other important factors. First of all, she makes the argument that the professionalization of the Canadian historical profession has had two main baleful effects on the public's taste for Canadian history. When history becomes a profession, she points out, the tendency is for historians to write shorter and more detailed articles and monographs on a much more spatially and temporally delimited subjects than 'amateur' historians. While such careful studies form the basis of broader introductory works, they are not of much interest to the general reading public. A second negative effect is that professional historians shy away from writing what is perhaps the most popular historical genre: the heroic biography. As she argues, "the average intelligent reader rightly feels that he can best learn his history through the men who helped make it" (Neatby, 1951: 209).

Along with sounding this new theme of the professional historian's tendency towards specialization and withdrawal from 'common sense', Neatby isolates a new potent threat to national memory: the electronic media. While she sees radio and film (TV was not yet an issue) as playing a potentially valuable role in the popularization of Canadian

history, she is leery of their capacity to conflate fact and fiction. She writes that “it must be emphasized that indiscriminate plucking from the quaint and the picturesque will not, of itself, teach the Canadian people anything of their history...” (Neatby, 1951: 214). In order to avoid syncretistic and misleading presentations of the past, the writing of historical reenactments should be policed by professional historians who would be enlisted to “cast an eye over the finished scripts in order to eliminate errors or faults of interpretation which might escape the notice of the amateur” (Neatby, 1951: 215).

According to Neatby, the need for the policing of the line between fact and fiction was much more pressing in the case of film than in radio because “Information from the film given mainly through pictures may be far more subtly and powerfully misleading than anything in a radio talk” (*ibid.*). Curiously, Neatby feels no need to further support this assertion. As Raphael Samuel argues in *Theatres of Memory, vol.I* (1994), the ‘distrust of graven images’ is a central aspect of the formation of the historian’s *habitus*. The historian’s whole training, he writes, “disposes us to give a privileged place to the written word, to hold the visual (and the verbal) in comparatively low esteem, and to regard imagery as a kind of trap” (Samuel, 1994: 268). For Neatby, given its ‘dangerous’ character, the audiovisual media’s presentation of Canadian history must be undertaken by film companies that are both Canadian and publicly-funded if it is to contribute to ‘the variety and the richness of Canadian life’. If Hollywood (the great animus of the Canadian cultural nationalist elite) is allowed to get its claws on the Canadian past, it will be sure to reproduce that glorious past with “the attitude of the Hollywood producer who wished his Sir Galahad to pose in a toga” (Neatby, 1951: 215).

Canadian Left-Nationalism and the Nostalgia for Memory

Neatby's Arnoldi in contrast of Canadian/public/civilizing forms of culture versus American/commercial/ba'barizing culture would continue to fester in the Canadian nationalist imagination until it exploded in the mid- to late 1960s with the publication of books such as George Grant's Lament for a Nation (1969) and Bernard Hodggett's What Culture? What Heritage (1968) as well as the cultural crusades of Robin Matthews at Carleton University and his ilk. In Lament for a Nation, for example, Grant argues that while Canadian history had developed on its own 'special path' and produced a distinct and morally superior 'people' north of the 49th parallel, the increasing movement towards an American-based transnational capitalist economy signals the end of Canadian particularity because it is in the very nature of capitalism that national boundaries become only matters of 'political formality'. With the aid of ever more powerful communication, information and transportation technologies, he argues, the 'imperial power' of American trans-national corporations has "destroyed indigenous cultures in every corner of the globe" (Grant, 1991: 64). The result of this massive cultural pogrom has been that cultural identities are no longer the product of cultural memories and traditions but are constructed through the act of consumption. As Grant laments, this has the effect of further reducing cultural diversity:

In the mass era, most human beings are defined in terms of their capacity to consume. All other differences between them, like political traditions, begin to appear unreal and unprogressive. As consumption becomes primary, the border appears as an anachronism, and a frustrating one at that. (Grant, 1991: 90)

As Ian Angus points out in A Border Within (1997), while Lament for a Nation was structured by the melancholic recognition that ‘you can’t go home again’, that did not stop its subsequent interpreters from trying. When Grant’s lament was taken up in what Angus calls the “left-nationalist discourse” (which was hegemonic among Canadian intellectuals from the late 1960s to the late 1980s), its melancholic structuring of Canadian history was rejected in favour of a nostalgic structure. As Angus details, “the main rhetorical form of left-nationalism is a lament for the failure to adequately preserve the past and an argument that such preservation requires a radical reorientation in the future. It is a vision of a Loyalist, Tory past and a socialist future” (Angus, 1997:32). In the left-nationalist appropriation of Grant’s reading of Canadian history, lament was thus

relegated to covering only the story *up until now*. The other half of the story was oriented to the possibility of independence in the future, which was contingent on its most characteristic rhetorical component—the necessity for decision in the present...Left-nationalism must always position itself one step before the end and point to ‘one last chance.’ (Angus, 1997: 32)

In the Trudeau era (circa 1968-1984), the left-nationalist story of a once distinct and morally superior people fighting to recover its lost majesty in the face of American imperialism assumed a hegemonic status among Canadian intellectuals and policymakers. On the political level, it led to the development of the (ultimately toothless) Foreign Investment Review Agency as well as a renewed emphasis on the role of cultural policy and public broadcasting as a means of preserving ‘the Canadian identity’. In the intellectual realm, it led to a new interest in the study of Canadian culture, a drive to hire Canadian academics as well as the institutionalization of the ‘Canadian Studies Movement’ through the creation of Canadian Studies departments in universities across Canada.

However, the left-nationalist fixation with American imperialism and its championing of the Canadian state as the protector of the people against that imperialism created a stultifying narrowing of the discussion of culture in Canadian intellectual and public culture. As Angus explains, the expanded anthropological concept of 'culture' as 'a way of life' underwent three reductions in this period. First of all, 'culture' is reduced to industrially produced culture. Secondly, the concept of public intervention in culture is reduced to government regulation with the result that the question of the existence of a Canadian 'civil society' and/or 'democratic public sphere' is left unasked. Finally, the view of culture as an industrially produced good demanding government regulation promotes a notion of Canadian culture as uniform. The net result of these reductions, Angus argues, is that any larger discussion of culture in the Canadian context became "a backdrop for, and legitimization of, discussion of government policy towards cultural industries" (Angus, 1997: 40).

The Decline of Left-Nationalism in a Postmodern and Postcolonial Canada

Since the mid- to late 1980s, this discourse and its statist assumptions have been challenged on a bewildering variety of fronts. On the level of political movements, it has been contested (in surprisingly congruent ways at times) by the rise of the New Right and the 'new social movements'. To take the New Right first, this movement combines a strange mix of socially conservative and economically neo-liberal values. In its neo-liberal guise, the New Right rejects the left-nationalist belief that the state should provide anything more than the basic necessities of national life—an army, a legal system, a police force and so on. If people want jobs, health care, schools and other such amenities, they

should look to their families, their congregations and the 'community' and not the state.

This institutional libertarianism is coupled with a cultural authoritarianism which asserts that while the state should protect and propagate what the New Right calls 'family values' (which are generally Anglo-white, Protestant and patriarchal), it should not be in the business of sanctioning and protecting what it views as 'deviant' cultural practices, ideas and identities (feminism, homosexuality, ethnic groups which refuse assimilation, etc.). In other words, in its neo-liberal guise, the New Right is a localizing movement that seeks to shift the locus of cultural identification and economic responsibility away from the nation-state to the affective loyalties of family, church and community. Ironically, in spite of its localist rhetoric, it remains quite content to use the full disciplinary power of the national state to achieve its cultural aims of protecting 'family values'.

This localism is conjoined in New Right thought to a commitment to economic globalization. In both North America and Europe, the New Right has led the charge for the construction of regional free trade zones such as NAFTA and the European Union and the project of creating a global free trade zone. These projects have been accompanied by the discourse of the 'dictates of the global economy' in which national publics are told that their collective success in that nebulous entity, the global economy, requires individual sacrifices for the good of the nation. In order to 'compete effectively', social services will have to be cut, arts and culture funding left to the private sector and tax loads on the wealthiest will have to be reduced. The payoff for this is economic success, a more 'responsive' and 'efficient' health, education and social security network which results when bloated and rent-seeking national bureaucracies are dismantled in favour of private

and community-run institutions and Canadian culture which 'truly' represents so-called 'core Canadian values'. In other words, in its economic guise, the New Right commits itself to the dissolution of the nation-state in two convergent ways: it seeks to reorganize trade and production on a global (as well as the regulation of trade and production through institutions like the IMF) rather than a national scale, it seeks to shift responsibility (and credit) for the provision of social services and cultural production from the nation-state to private or communal/local organizations.

At the same time that the New Right was rising to contest left nationalism from outside, the new social movements and the rise of 'the politics of identity' challenged it from within the confines of the left. As Jurgen Habermas details in the second volume of The Theory of Communicative Action (1984), the new social movements range from the environmental movement, the feminist movement, the anti-racism movement, the gay rights movement to movements for regional, linguistic and cultural autonomy. As opposed to the traditional left-nationalist fixation on the relationship between the state and its regulatory powers and its defense of national versus transnational corporations, the new social movements tend to gravitate towards extra-institutional forms of organization and protest. Furthermore, they sound very different themes than the traditional left. While the latter sought to rally 'the workers' or 'fellow Canadians' by appealing to shared attributes, social position, practices or loyalties, the new social movements have placed a strong emphasis on equality "as a lived experience of 'difference' rather than equality as sameness... This forces us to attend to the different socio-cultural relations experienced by specific individuals and groups; what we are asked to recognize is their unique identity,

their distinctiveness from everyone else.” (Sigurdson, 1994: 258). The emphasis on distinctiveness leads members of these new movements to reject the attempt to subsume ethnic, gender and other struggles under universalist appeals to ‘class’ or ‘nation’ and advocate the formation of, at best, loose and temporary alliances between the various movements around issues of common concern. As a result, the ‘New Left’ is perhaps equally corrosive of left-nationalism as the ‘New Right’ in that it celebrates the particular over the universal, the local and the regional over the national.

In the years since Grant wrote his book, another important cultural change has dramatically altered Canada’s social landscape: the postcolonial diaspora. As John Dickinson suggests, the birthplace of left-nationalism—late 1960s Southern Ontario—was still overwhelmingly white and British. However, from the 1970s onward, successive waves of immigration from the Caribbean, the Pacific Asian nations, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, central, eastern and southern Europe and Africa dramatically changed the racial character of the area to the point where Toronto has become the most ethnically diverse city in the world (Dickinson, 1996).

For the nationalists who seek to preserve Canadian culture and tradition, these new immigrants pose a special set of problems because they tend to draw on very different sets of cultural memories for their projects of self-constitution. As Rinaldo Walcott argues, such “histories, memories and experiences of dispersed peoples always act as a transgression of nation-state principles” (Walcott, 1999: 29) because they simultaneously exceed the boundary-making projects of the nation-state, challenge its legitimacy by showing how it rests on a suppression of their ‘differences’ in the name of national identity

and claim a dual nationality. In exceeding the national narrative by drawing on transnational or traveling memories, they deny the nationalist tenet that boundedness is a prerequisite for shared identity. In so doing, they rob the bounded nation-state form of its necessary character and reveal it to be one of many possible forms of belonging. Not only do they rob the nation-state of its necessity, they also force its defenders into a recognition of the particularity of the nation. While, as Marx suggests in The German Ideology, every ruling class must somehow represent its interests as universal (even to itself), the persistence of extra-national memories and memories of oppression at the hands of the nation mitigate this effort. In the Canadian context, for example, the proliferation of so-called multicultural voices has forced the more sensitive and acute members of the ruling class to recognize the whiteness of the national narrative. Finally, these memories suggest the possibilities of the breakdown of the unitary and exclusionary logic of the nationalist habitus. As we have seen, nationalism is predicated on the belief that the nation is the primary site of cultural belonging and that possession of the bundle of ideas, practices, values and memories from one nation excludes possession of those of another. However, many so-called 'new Canadians' assert their right and ability to do exactly that. They argue that one can be both a Sikh and a Canadian and that such hybrid constructions do not represent a 'failure of patriotism'. In so doing, they put the exclusionary and unitary logic of nationalism into question and suggest the possibility of a 'post-national' global order in which "bounded territories...give way to diasporic networks, nations to transnations, and patriotism itself could become plural, serial, contextual and mobile" (Appadurai, 1993: 428).

It could be argued, however, that this recent proliferation of diasporic memories on Canadian soil does not constitute some sort of historical rupture but rather is an extension or exacerbation (depending on your politics) of existing trends in Canadian cultural history. Along with being an immigration destination for many of the world's displaced peoples, Canada is a plurinational and multicultural country whose colonial history has produced three mutually antagonistic 'founding peoples' and whose political and economic history has created lasting regional tensions. As a result, every attempt to represent an event in Canadian history has always involved taking a position within a broader politics of memory. In other words to read an event like the Conquest, for example, as the birth of a bicultural nation or as the subjugation of a once proud and independent people involves not only the commitment to a certain line of historical interpretation but also to a concomitant political position on the power-saturated relationship between the various cultural groups and political factions in contemporary Canada. As a result, John Dickinson argues, the belief in the cohering power of 'national history' is rooted in a nostalgia for the "old certainties and identities of pre-1960s Canada". As he writes: "No consensual view [of Canadian history] has ever existed that could reconcile all Canadians...[Only] As long as the majority in English Canada was still British and French-Canada could still be ignored, the illusion that a widely accepted common history existed could be maintained" (Dickinson, 1996: 148).

These historic difficulties in securing a shared national memory in Canada have been exacerbated by recent technological change. Since the days of the pulp press, Canada has always had to deal with the fact that American popular culture and mythic memories

have always encountered little resistance crossing into Canada. In fact, as we saw in our reading of “Minute by Minute” in the introduction, one of the greatest causes of memorial nationalist anxiety is the belief (apocryphal or otherwise) that young Canadians are more likely to know that George Washington confessed to chopping down a cherry tree than to know that Sir John A. Macdonald was Canada’s first prime minister. More recently, this traditional source of nationalist anxiety has been exacerbated by the recent explosion of computer-mediated communications and the proliferation of television and radio stations appealing to a broad variety of ‘niche markets’. In the eyes of some, this situation has led to what might be described, from a nationalist standpoint, as a crisis of the overproduction of narratives and memories. As Ernest Renan pointed out in “What is a Nation?” (1939), the construction of a national memory is predicated on the nation’s ability to practice systematic forgetting. That is to say, it whittles the multiplicity of available cultural memories and narratives down to a select few which will provide members of the nation with an easily communicable and cognitively accessible schema for understanding the world and their role in that newly simplified world.

However, as the Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo argues in The Transparent Society (1992), the explosive proliferation of avenues for telling stories and sharing memories over the last few decades has made such a process of selection and simplification difficult, if not impossible. In spite of the attempts by the state and media monopolies to continue to attempt to use the media to homogenize society, he argues, “radio, television and newspapers became elements in a general explosion and proliferation of *Weltanschauungen*, of world views. ... The West is living through an explosive

situation, not only with regard to other cultural universes such as the 'third world', but internally as well, as an apparently irresistible pluralization renders any unilinear view of the world and history impossible" (Vattimo, 1992: 5-6). While the idea of 'the West' as an historical entity as well as individual nations rested on a unitary and unilinear vision of reality and history, the "multiplicity of images, interpretations and reconstructions circulated by the media in competition with one another and without any 'central' coordination" (Vattimo, 1992: 6-7) makes it increasingly difficult for us to conceive of such a thing as a *single* reality or a *singular* history. As a result, the recognition is forced upon every cultural group that its values, memories, institutions, beliefs and practices are historically conditioned, contingent, finite and culturally specific.

When combined with the decolonization of the Third World and the return of the repressed memories and narratives of women and sexual, racial and ethnic minorities in 'the West', Vattimo argues, a posthistorical social order has emerged. His argument to support this view is Lyotardian rather than Hegelian. Unlike Francis Fukuyama who seems to suggest that all the great battles have been won and that nothing much else will happen in the future (Fukuyama, 1992), Vattimo believes that we will continue to live with the experience of change and the passage of time. However, following Lyotard's pronouncements on the death of the metanarrative in The Postmodern Condition (1984), Vattimo argues that we have abandoned the modern view of history as a unitary process. As I have been arguing in this chapter, the historicist view that the defining characteristics of a given cultural entity are the results not of some inherent essence but of its own unique and non-reproducible pattern of development was central to the formation of modern

nationalist ideology. So too was the idea that within time's unpredictable flow, the nation endured as a centre of stability that grounded the construction of states and narratives. In this way, the social reality envisioned by historicism was as an intermediate stage in a more general process of historicization because while it began with the Heraclitean view that 'all is flux', it surreptitiously used the nation to try to reintroduce necessity and permanence in time's flow.

Vattimo argues that modernity was able to sustain this reintroduction of necessity and permanence as long as it could control the number and kinds of narratives being told and maintain the illusion of the 'truth' and 'objectivity' of the sanctioned histories which were produced. In postmodern conditions, however, this becomes impossible. Not only have postcolonialism, the 'return of the repressed' and the rise of the multimedia universe rendered any unitary view of the past increasingly untenable, as we have already seen, the simple act of writing narrative histories has become problematic. First of all, traditional nation-centred narrative histories focusing on battles, diplomacy, politics, biographies of political leaders and so on now have to share the field with social histories, subaltern histories, cultural and linguistic histories, economic histories, histories of everyday life and so on with the result that those traditional nation-centred narrative histories are seen as one form of historical writing among many. Secondly, the application of the tools of literary and rhetorical analysis to the writing of history has revealed the full extent to which historiography is an act of poetic composition and not the simple reporting of 'facts'. Thirdly, the recognition that nation-centred narrative history is only one 'memory-genre' among many and that all are situated rhetorical performances leads to a new

awareness of the ideological nature of history. Vattimo argues that the net result of the recognition of the contingent, rhetorical and ideological character of nation-centred narrative history leads to its full historicization as one kind of writing which emerged at a certain point in western modernity in response to the incipient nation-state's need to establish its necessity, permanence and stability. This full historicization, he argues, "marks an end to historiography as the image, albeit a constantly varied one, of the unitary process of events, a process which itself loses all recognizable consistency when deprived of the unity that formerly defined it." (Vattimo, 1992: 9)

In his introduction to Realms of Memory (1996), Pierre Nora advances a series of arguments about the changing nature of memory in the contemporary West that supports Vattimo's assertions about the post-historicist nature of our present. Like Vattimo, he argues that the process such as decolonization and the explosion of new media in the last few decades have exacerbated an already existing modern tendency towards the historicization of mythic 'memory'—that precritical font of myths, memories and heroic acts which serves to situate cultures in a meaningful space and time. History, he argues, is profoundly subversive of mythic memory's attempt to, in Eliade's terms, escape 'the terror of history' by arresting the flow of time through the positing of permanencies or essences. As Nora writes, history "divests the lived past of its legitimacy. What looms on the horizon of every historical society, at the limit of a completely historicized world, is presumably a final, definitive disenchantment" (Nora, 1996: 3).

For much of the history of historiography, Nora argues, historians were content to try to disenchant the myth-memories of the two main objects of Enlightenment fear and

scorn: religion and 'common opinion'. In spite of this apparently iconoclastic streak, however, the tight link between historians, the nation-state and nationalism remained unquestioned until well into the 20th century. Historians, he writes, "speaking half as soldiers, half as priests, bore the burden of responsibility on behalf of the nation... History was holy because the nation was holy" (Nora, 1996: 5). As public pedagogues, historians felt the need to secure the identity and continuity of the nation as well as its sense of mission. For that purpose, narrative political, biographical, military and diplomatic histories recounting the nation's past triumphs and suggesting its glorious destiny were constructed to lend a sense of continuity, permanence and necessity to the nation.

However, Nora argues, the 20th century has witnessed the development of a new self-reflexivity in the profession. The historical profession "has begun to question its own conceptual and material resources, its production processes and the social means of distribution, its origins and tradition" (Nora, 1996: 4). The resulting disenchantment of its own history has led the historical profession to strongly question its tight link to the nation, to processes of mythmaking, to narrative and to the historicist view of the state as the only unchanging essences in the flow of time. The result of this disenchantment was the opening up of a whole new universe of objects of historical study and ways of writing about those newly discovered pasts. However, there was a price to be paid for the historical profession's abandonment of its role as public/nationalist pedagogue and its rejection of the writing of unitary national narratives. As he argues, when historiography "shed its identification with the nation, it lost its subjective force as well as its pedagogical

mission, the transmission of value..." with the result that "The nation is no longer the unifying framework that defines the collective consciousness" (Nora, 1996: 6).

In his writings on the subject of post-historicism, Vattimo suggests that the end of nationalist unifying narrative frameworks holds open new emancipatory possibilities. In a world characterized both by the death of metanarratives and the overproduction of local narratives, we experience what he calls 'a general disorientation'. Unlike previous eras where at least those in power could believe in the universality of their memories, values and narratives, none of us have that luxury anymore. Whenever we speak or make a value judgment, we are always forced to recognize that our dialect is just one among many and that the values we defend are historically and culturally specific and continually subject to revision. "To live in this pluralistic world," he writes, "means to experience freedom as a continual oscillation between belonging and disorientation...[and to recognize that] being does not necessarily coincide with what is stable, fixed and permanent, but has instead to do with the event, with consensus, dialogue and interpretation" (Vattimo, 1992: 10-11). In order to remain open to these emancipatory possibilities, Vattimo warns, we must guard against succumbing to our individual and collective "nostalgia for the reassuring, yet menacing, closure of horizons" (Vattimo, 1992: 11).

Reconstituting Canada: the discourse of the memory-crisis in the 1990s

As Tessa Morris-Suzuki argues in "Global Memories, National Accounts: Nationalism and the Rethinking of History", evidence is mounting that such a nostalgia for closure is on the rise (in fact, René Girardet argues that the desire for enclosure is central to nostalgia). She argues that *fin de siècle* nationalism is "obsessed with the relationship

between globalisation, national identity, history and memory. It expresses a characteristic populism which seeks to defend 'natural' or 'commonsensical' visions of the nation from the corrosive cynicism of a menacing 'cosmopolitan' elite" (Morris-Suzuki, 2002: 2).

Millennial nationalists across the globe are united, Morris-Suzuki argues, by a shared understanding of the role of history in fostering social cohesion within nation-states in the face of external threats and internal insecurities and as a primer of morals. However, she points out, these nationalists champion a very specific kind of history as conducive to the recreation of national identity—simple “exemplary tales of individual morality and heroism” (Morris-Suzuki, 2002: 7). In his writings on the relationship between history and contemporary nationalism, Frank Furedi goes even further. He discerns that what lies behind the desire to disseminate a nostalgic vision of a simple and heroic past which has been expunged of embarrassing moments is a desire for a “kind of social or national fiction that is self-validating and confers the sanction of the past on all those who invoke its authority” (Furedi, 1992: 28-9).

As we have seen from our historical examination of the politics of public memory in Canada, the discourse of the memory-crisis is also founded on such a desire for an heroic past and a consequent closure of horizons. It figures Canadian memory as perennially threatened by disintegration and dispersal in the face of a multiplicity of competing memories drawn from familial, local, provincial, ethnic, American, pop cultural and transnational sources. In order to arrest this vertiginous and centrifugal free flow of commemoration, this discourse demands a rearticulation and re-binding of Canadian memory around the comforting closures of the Canadian nationalist narrative. The

safeguarding of the nation's borders requires a fixing of its memory in both the senses of 'fixing'. That is to say, that the national memory must be secured within a certain bounded space (the nation-state) and within a certain delimited series of events (the colony to nation story). Furthermore, it must be purged of 'prejudices' or 'misconceptions' about that past which are always the product of pernicious outsiders (American pop culture, Quebec nationalists, alienated leftist intellectuals and so on).

The Discourse of the Memory-Crisis Reprised

Given the recent proliferation of new impediments to our ability to invoke narrative closure catalogued above and cultural or, perhaps more aptly, memorial nationalism's built-in longing for closure, it should come as no surprise that the last decade has witnessed a well-publicized recurrence of the discourse of the memory-crisis. If we agree to bracket our post-Derridean concerns about the search for origins, an article published in a 1992 edition of The Journal of Canadian Studies by the eminent University of Toronto historian Michael Bliss is as close to the *locus classicus* of this most recent recurrence of the discourse of the memory-crisis as can be found.

True to form, Bliss begins by figuring the present as fallen and crisis-ridden by titling his paper "Privatizing the Mind: the Sundering of Canadian History, the Sundering of Canada". He then launches into a long catalogue of suspected causes of the contemporary memory-crisis. We have already seen many of these mnemnophages elsewhere: regionalist and separatist political movements, hyper-specialized professional historians and academics generally who are obsessed with the particular and who write in a hermetic jargon which is inaccessible to all but an inner sanctum of acolytes, the near

abandonment of heroic biography and the American tabloidesque desecration of the memory of those ‘greats’ who are the subjects of biography. For example, in C.P. Stacey’s hands, we are told, the successful and canny Mackenzie King was “replaced by Willie King the spiritualist and sexual wimp” (Bliss, 1992: 10). Along with these traditional objects of memorial nationalist fear and scorn comes some new culprits. Liberal, or what Angus calls left-, nationalists and their attempt to identify “Canada and things Canadian with certain trends in one limited period of Canadian history—with the age of big government, universal social welfare programs, and subsidized culture” are accused of forwarding “a vision of Canada that [not] all, or even most, Canadians shared” (Bliss, 1992: 12). Their successors, the Mulroney Conservatives, on the other hand, were complicit in a very different way. While the statist and anti-American assumptions of the left-nationalists provided them with a couple of ‘hooks’ around which they could pattern a narrative of Canada’s past, present and future, the Mulroney Conservatives “seemed to have no sense of a viable, let alone a vibrant, Canada that they wanted to create” (Bliss, 1992: 13). In the absence of such a coherent narrative, the Conservatives found themselves at a loss to defend their neo-liberal commitments to the privatization of government services. As Bliss explains, this lack of a historical vision created a new ‘legitimacy crisis’ for the Canadian state: “As the Conservatives moved to privatize Canadian life, they did so without realizing that they were attacking what was perhaps the only sense of public Canada that Canadians had left. If you dismantled those institutions and programs that Liberal nationalists argued were the very essence of Canada, people would say you were in fact dismantling Canada” (Bliss, 1992: 13-14). The political

culmination of all of these amnesiac tendencies, Bliss argues, were the constitutional crises that dominated Canadian public life in the 1980s and the early 1990s (I'm quite certain that he would explain the 1995 referendum and the near-victory for the Quebec nationalists as the product of a strong Quebecois national memory versus the disintegrated Canadian national memory). The debate on the Meech Lake Accord, he writes, "was notable for a pathetically low level of discussion of the Accord's provisions in the context of the sweep of Canadian history" (Bliss, 1992: 14).

Characteristically, Bliss follows this extended lament on a hopeful note. In spite of the fact that, with a few exceptions, the Canadian political and intellectual elite continues to fiddle in their ivory towers, the Canadian 'people' are well aware of the national memory-crisis. He notes approvingly that there exists "a demand on the part of Canadians, amounting to a kind of hunger, for help in understanding where we came from, who we are, and where we might be going" (Bliss, 1992: 15). This assertion about what 'the people' want then becomes a clarion call for historians, teachers and journalists to work together to produce a new national history to satisfy that posited 'hunger'. Such a national history, Bliss is cautious to point out, must not be 'nationalistic', 'mythological' or white, male Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto-centric. Instead, it must incorporate the experiences of the so-called 'Charter Canadians'—native peoples, women and ethnic minorities. In so doing, it can better help us to see how "Canada's past can equip us for a Canadian future." (Bliss, 1992: 17).

While Bliss' article was perhaps the first and certainly the most nuanced and coherent text proclaiming the new memory-crisis, it was certainly not the last. As Ken

Osborne details in “‘Our History Syllabus Has Us Gasping’: History in Canadian Schools—Past, Present and Future”, the relationship between national identity and the public’s knowledge of history (or putative lack thereof) came once again to occupy a central place in Canadian public debate. In the 1990s, he writes

the teaching of history became newsworthy. In the wake of the failed Charlottetown Accord, Keith Spicer and Joe Clark expressed their alarm at what they saw as Canadians’ ignorance of history—an ignorance that has been confirmed by subsequent surveys. In 1992 the furore over the television series *The Valour and the Horror* fuelled charges that schools were ignoring Canada’s military history and that history had fallen victim to political correctness. Canada’s National History Society was established in 1994, and the Dominion Institute not long afterwards, both in their different ways dedicated to arousing public interest in Canadian history. (Osborne, 2000: 406-7)

While it had been slowly reasserting its presence in the early 1990s, a single event in 1995 pushed the production of the memory-crisis discourse into overdrive. That event was the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty association. Initially expected to be a cakewalk for the federalist forces, the results were much closer—at the end of the night, the federalist side had won only by a fraction of a percentage point. This surprising near-loss sent shock waves through the Canadian nationalist elite. While many blamed the potentially devastating result on the federal government’s recurrent failure to secure constitutional recognition of Quebec’s ‘special status’ and others blamed Jean Chrétien’s unpopularity in his home province and his lackadaisical approach to the ‘No’ campaign, others cast around for cultural explanations.

As often as not, this latter explanatory strategy asserted that, at its roots, the Canadian constitutional crisis was really a memory-crisis. This prognosis came from all quarters. For example, A. Charles Baillie, the CEO of TD Bank, gave a speech titled

“Respecting Differences to Make Canada Work” to the Canadian Club in the fall of 1997 in which he voiced the now familiar refrain that “we are gripped by an appalling, abiding ignorance of each other, of our shared past, of what has made this country great. The lessons of our history are forgotten. The ties that bind are falling away” (Baillie, 1997: 16). As a result of this “profound amnesia of our collective Canadian experience” (ibid.), he argues, demagogues on both sides of the linguistic divide are winning over Canadian hearts and minds. Without a rediscovery of our shared national past, he concluded, Canada will be irrevocably lost.

Many prominent politicians and journalists echoed Baillie’s diagnosis. As J.R. Miller reports, Peter Mansbridge, anchor of CBC’s The National, gave a speech in 1997 appropriately titled “Canada’s History: Why Do We Know So Little?” in which he chided Canadians for the paucity of their historical knowledge and their alleged belief in the dullness of Canadian history. There is, he argued, “no shortage of Canadian history. And the stereotype is dead wrong. Our history is NOT dull. But we are dull-witted when it comes to learning about it. We cheat ourselves. We cheat our children. We cheat our country” (quoted in Miller, 1997: 9). Two years later, the Canadian prime minister, Jean Chrétien, for one, publicly concurred with Mansbridge’s contention by arguing that what little history Canadians learn was poorly taught and that if it were taught better, “the nation would be healthier. No doubt about it.” (quoted in Osborne, 2000: 406).

While one could cite countless more examples of members of the Canadian political, economic and cultural elite making such declarations in the last five years, I think that a more productive approach would be to devote the rest of this discussion to a work

which has perhaps done the most to push the discourse to the forefront of public debate in the last decade: Jack Granatstein's Who Killed Canadian History? (1998).

As its title suggests, this book is yet another philippic on the death of Canadian memory. True to the pattern that we have already discerned, it begins with a ritual beating of breasts and wailing of laments over the national memory crisis. "Ours is a nation", he writes, "where everyone... seems to be engaged in an unthinking conspiracy to eliminate Canada's past" (Granatstein, 1999: 3). The conspirators are then named: regionalists, left-leaning educational bureaucrats who are more interested in building up the child's 'self-image' than her knowledge, ethnic Canadians who demand an 'offence-free' education for their children, school boards who capitulate to such 'politically correct' demands, the media which mines the past only for scandals, university professors who have abandoned their role as public pedagogues by abjuring the writing of nation-centred narrative histories in favour of particularized and specialized approaches to the past, university presses and granting agencies that encourage professors to write unreadable books on minuscule subjects', and, finally, the federal government for its timidity about forcing the provinces "to give Canadians what they want and need: a sense that they live in a nation with a glorious past and a great future" (Granatstein, 1999: 140).

The acts of announcing the death of memory and naming its assassins performed, Granatstein's text quickly moves to the perfunctory recitation of the main tenets of historicist/nationalist faith: "The task of the current generation is to build on the past, to understand it, and, where necessary, to triumph over it... History is important because it helps people know themselves. It tells them who they were and who they are..."

(Granatstein, 1999: 5). In other words, Granatstein is arguing that history, like myth, secures the identity and continuity of the present community with its past by aligning them in series. Unlike myth that tended to have cyclical view of the passage of time, however, Granatstein's 'history' is linear, cumulative, progressive and allows for the possibility of future change.

However, as in myth, nostalgia and cultural nationalism, Granatstein tends not to locate the possibility of change in invention and/or creation but in rediscovery and reanimation. His narrative of the rise of social history in Canada and its baleful effects on the national memory, for example, is strongly informed by the *topoi* of contamination and betrayal. In Granatstein's 'golden age' of Canadian historiography circa 1950-1970 (a period which, not coincidentally, corresponded with Granatstein's youth and coming of age), heroes and giants walked the halls of Canadian history departments. Historians in those good old days like Donald Creighton did not wince when faced with their duties to the Canadian public. They devoted themselves to the study of Canada's long road from colony to nation through an engagement with its political, constitutional and diplomatic history. Such men (sexists connotations intended), he explains were not afraid to assert that "narrative was important, that chronology mattered, and that the study of the past could not neglect the personalities of the leaders and the nations they led" (Granatstein, 1999: 57).

This all changed in the late 1960s when younger historians started to turn their back on their national heritage, went off elsewhere to study and then returned to inject foreign viruses in the national body politic. As he narrates, the golden age came to a

catastrophic end when “more students went overseas or to the United States to do graduate work...[and] came home with new interests and new approaches. They wanted to write about ordinary people, not the leaders, the boring old white males who dominated the traditional history” (Granatstein, 1999: 56). As a result of its contamination by foreign ideas, the Canadian historical profession entered into a diluvial period in which nothing remotely resembling a stable and secure place on which to anchor national memory and identity could be found. Instead, Granatstein argues, what resulted was the accession of ‘social history’, which Granatstein dismisses as an approach dedicated to the production of disorganized, highly politicized and particularistic victimologies.

However, as is always the case in such nostalgic polemics, Granatstein assures us that all is not lost. Within the torrent of particularism and victimology set off by the rise of social history, there have been small islands where ‘sacred keepers of the flame’ have heroically worked to keep the national memory alive. Over the past few decades, journalists like Pierre Berton and Peter C. Newman have done what professional historians will not or cannot do: they have produced popular and readable national histories. Similarly, within the historical profession, historians like Robert Bothwell, Doug Owram, David Bercuson, Michael Bliss, Desmond Morton and others have braved their disapprobation of their ‘PC’ peers to “produce books of large-scale narrative, on important national themes, that achieve popular appeal” (Granatstein, 1999: 73). Finally, the question ‘whither Canadian national history?’ has emerged once again as a topic of journalistic interest and public debate. In other words, Granatstein sees many hopeful signs that Canada’s ‘dark night of the soul’ is giving way to a new dawn.

This 'resurrection' of the golden age of full national memory, he argues, is by no means guaranteed. The 'assassins of memory' are still omnipresent and keeping them at bay will require a sustained effort on the part of both the citizenry and the various levels of the state. If they want to save Canadian memory, concerned citizens will have to take it upon themselves to pressure school boards and provincial ministries of education to increase the amount and improve the quality of the historical education received by their children. The greatest role, however, is reserved for the federal government. He suggests a whole range of measures from the creation of national standards for the teaching of history, to the endowment of a Centre for National History, to providing scholarships for promising young historians. While such measures, he argues, will cost money, it will be a more than worthwhile investment in terms of its ability to produce national subjects. As he explains using language that echoes Fichte's trope of 'the binding of the will', Granatstein concludes that

If Canada is to be worthy of its envied standing in the world, if it is to offer something to its own people and to humanity, it will have to forge a national spirit that can unite its increasingly diverse peoples. We cannot achieve this unanimity unless we teach our national history, celebrate our founders, establish new symbols, and strengthen the terms of our citizenship... We have a nation to save and a future to build. (Granatstein, 1999: 148-9).

In other words, recovery of our glorious past will save our future from our fallen present.

I can think of no clearer example of the use of nostalgia as a rallying-cry. In the next chapter, we will begin our in-depth look at a project that has most tellingly taken up Granatstein's nostalgic call to arms: the Heritage Minutes.

Chapter 4: Rebuilding the Memorial Infrastructure

While Granatstein's call to recuperate the present and secure the future of Canada built upon the nascent stirrings of the discourse of the memory-crisis in the early to mid-1990s, it has galvanized public discussion on the question of Canadian public memory. As Granatstein himself reports in the preface to its second edition, when this book was first published in 1997, it was a surprise bestseller and in hard cover alone, it has sold over 10000 copies. Its effect on Canadian public culture has been profound. In the five years since it was written, several academic symposia have been convened to discuss the issues it raises; the Globe & Mail and Saturday Night have devoted a great deal of page space to discussion of the politics of contemporary Canadian memory; it has been the subject of countless laudatory editorials and is regularly quoted approvingly by parliamentarians of all stripes; and it has inspired so-called 'ordinary Canadians' to pressure provincial governments to increase the level of history taught to their children and to create websites devoted to Canadian history.

Granatstein's book also prompted a renewed investment in the national memorial infrastructure and the production of 'popular' national histories. The CBC, for example, produced an ambitious documentary series entitled Canada: a People's History (whose production was justified by a more centrist, liberal nationalist version of the memory discourse voiced by its producer, Mark Starowicz) which also surprised many with its popularity and, in 1998, the NFB allocated \$5 million over five years for the creation of a website dedicated to Canadian history (Granatstein, 1998). Soon after the book was published, Granatstein himself was appointed Director and CEO of the Canadian War

Museum. Under his direction, the cramped and decaying museum has undergone a renaissance. Its previously neglected collection of war art has gained national exposure as a result of a grant from the Donner Canadian Foundation and the federal government has recently announced tentative plans to construct a new war museum on Ottawa's Lebreton Flats. What is more, as the Ottawa Citizen reported on May 4, 2001, plans are in the works for the construction of 'an institute of Canadian history' on the same site. Such an institute, seemingly inspired by Granatstein's call for a 'Centre for Canadian History' in the conclusion of his book, would be equally funded by the federal government and, as the report tells us, "some of Canada's largest corporations".

This recent spate of investment in the Canadian memorial infrastructure seems to raise a question asked by Ken Osborne in his history of the discourse of the memory-crisis: why does the discourse of the memory-crisis seem to crop up at fairly regular 25 year intervals (Osborne, 2000)? One possible answer comes from Alvin Gouldner. In his book The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class (1979), Gouldner argues that the beating of the nationalist drum against posited external threats is one of the main rhetorical tools in the humanist intellectual's bag of tricks. He argues that an intellectual and political movement to recuperate 'national' control over economic and cultural production is "among other things, a struggle to preempt elite positions for *native* intellectuals and intelligentsia, by taking over and creating their own state apparatus" (Gouldner, 1979: 60-61). In other words, Gouldner might argue that the recurrence of the Canadian memory-crisis is itself an attempt to assuage a recurrent overproduction of

Canadian humanist intellectuals by creating new jobs within the public service and para-state institutions like universities and public broadcasters.

In making this argument, Gouldner anticipated Pierre Bourdieu's argument in Distinction (1984) that both the dominant and the dominated classes can be fruitfully analyzed as being internally fractured as a result of the differential distribution of what he calls "economic and "cultural" capital within and across social classes. While the former type refers to the various forms of material wealth, the latter refers to a combination of linguistic and communicative competence, capacity for aesthetic judgment and specialized knowledge of "legitimate" culture that, in many instances, can be converted in to economic capital. As Bourdieu argues, the unequal possession of one of these two different forms of capital "defines class membership and... determines position in the power relations constituting the field of power and also determines the strategies available for use in these struggles" (Bourdieu, 1984: 315). This is the case because "economic and cultural capital—are simultaneously instruments of power and stakes in the struggle for power; they are unequally powerful in real terms and unequally recognized as legitimate principles or authority" (Bourdieu, 1984: 316). As a result of this inequality in social power and prestige, he argues, there is an ongoing battle in contemporary Western societies within the dominant class between the 'economic' class fraction of producers, business people and so on and the 'cultural' class fraction of bourgeois educators, artists and humanist intellectuals. In this struggle for legitimacy, the former use their control over the "means of production", some aspects of the media (especially the news media) and parts of the state to legitimate their dominant position and disparage the latter as

“deviants” and “dreamers” while the latter use their control of educational institution (especially in the arts and social sciences) and cultural production to castigate the former for “their philistine materialism and anti-intellectual machismo” (ibid.).

In modern Western nations, the class fraction of bourgeois humanist intellectuals (comprising historians, ‘cultural’ scholars, artists, novelists, essayists and so on) has traditionally legitimated its existence by defining its role as one of preserving, interpreting and disseminating national culture and memory. As the twentieth century has progressed, however, this class fraction has found its historical fund of cultural and economic resources and prestige eroded away by the rise of a technical intelligentsia (engineers, research scientists, economists, computer specialists and so on) which claims that it, unlike the ‘superfluous’ humanists, produces ‘relevant’, ‘marketable’ and generally ‘useful’ knowledge. Social scientists also claim that they, unlike the ‘speculative’ humanists, produced scientifically verifiable ‘truths’ about social reality. In voicing their fears for the lamentable state of the national memory, Gouldner and Bourdieu might argue, traditional humanist intellectuals are really trying to secure recognition of their centrality to the reproduction of national culture as well as the need to provide them with the financial and other resources and positions within the governmental apparatus required to, in Granatstein’s words, “save the nation and build its future”.

If we look at the last two iterations of the memory-crisis, Gouldner’s point would certainly seem to be valid. As Ian Angus narrates, one of the major stated aims of the late 1960s version of the crisis was to secure preferential treatment for Canadian intellectuals over their British and American counterparts before university hiring committees.

Furthermore, this period also witnessed a large expansion of what Kevin Dowler has termed “the cultural policy apparatus”. As Bernard Ostry details in The Cultural Connection (1978), between the years 1967-68 and 1977-78, the federal government’s expenditures on culture increased by 367% (from \$243.9 million in 1967-68 to \$849.8 million in 1977-78). In terms of person-years, this figure is even more impressive. In this period, there was a 502% increase in the number of person-years that the federal government allocated to the “cultural policy apparatus”. Furthermore, the story is the same for provincial governments. Ostry calculates that in the same period, the provincial governments increased their expenditures from \$ 81.4 million in 1967-68 to \$ 625.9 million in 1977-78—a 769% increase (Ostry, 1978). This expanded apparatus played a dual role in reinforcing the class position of the humanist intellectuals: it provided them with positions as researchers and policy-makers within government departments such as the Canada Council or the various permutations of Heritage and Parks Canada as well as para-governmental ‘think tanks’ and ‘policy shops’ and it also sought to protect their ‘nationalistic’ cultural and media products against foreign competition.

Similarly, the most recent iteration of this crisis can also be read as an attempt by the humanist class fraction to preserve its position. Beginning with the late 1980s, this position has become increasingly precarious as a result of prolonged recessions, industrial restructuring and the loosening of trade barriers. In a paper on the changing nature of citizenship education in Canada, Ken Osborne argues that the net result of this changing employment environment has been a gradual reduction of pedagogical emphasis on those subjects traditionally associated with civic education—history, literature, social studies—

as part of a more general reorientation of the curriculum towards preparing students for a technologically-saturated and ever-shifting job world. In their rush to make students computer literate, flexible and adaptable, he argues, “such long-time staples of citizenship education as history came to be seen as disposable, in order that schools could devote themselves to career preparation” (Osborne, 1996: 53).

While Osborne is concerned with changes to the public school system, his analysis also holds true for the university system. Since the late 1980s, provincial governments across the country have dramatically decreased funding to universities. For example, as the Council of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA) reported in a submission to the Government of Canada’s Caucus on Post-Secondary Education and Research, “Combined federal, provincial and municipal government grants and contracts to all universities *fell each year* between 1992/93 and 1997/98.” (CAFA, 2001:3). In Ontario, Canada’s largest and wealthiest province, the cuts have been even more staggering. As the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations (OCUFA) reported in 1998 at a pre-budget consultation the Ontario government’s Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, between 1993 and 1998, “the province has reduced operating grants to universities by 25% or \$539 million.”

This wave of cutbacks has forced university administrators to reduce existing operating costs, to rely more heavily on tuition as a source of funding and to search for new sources of revenue. All of these changes have dramatically impacted the class position of the humanist intellectuals in several ways. First of all, across Canada, there was a wave of layoffs amongst the professorial corps. AS OCUFA reports, the number of full-time

faculty in Ontario alone declined by 1,055 in the years between 1990 and 1998 (OCUFA, 1998) while CAFA reports a Canada-wide 9.7% decline in faculty levels between 1992/93 and 1998.99 (CAFA, 2001). Secondly, a new inter-departmental hierarchy emerged within universities. At the top were those departments that were held to be the most successful at producing ‘knowledge workers’. As CAFA reported: “Both federal and (in Alberta and some other provinces) provincial governments are financially favouring research and enrollment expansion in the physical sciences, engineering and information technology. Since neither level of government directly funds the overhead costs of research, this has the effect of paring away institutional support from other parts of the universities and transferring it to the favourite disciplines” (CAFA, 2001: 5). Typically hardest hit in this wave were those faculties that had been deemed ‘superfluous’ in the ‘new economy’—literature, classics, history and other areas of the arts and humanities. As CAFA reports: “Enrollment in the humanities, social sciences and fine and performing arts are therefore funded at ever-lower levels. Canadians interested in careers in these subject areas often feel like second class citizens” (ibid.). Thirdly, retirements and otherwise vacated positions within those ‘superfluous’ faculties were either not filled or staffed by sessional lecturers (OCUFA, 1998). Fourthly, in their search for new revenues, universities have doubled and tripled tuition in the last ten years. This increase in the cost of university has caused many students to view their undergraduate degrees as ‘investments’ rather than ‘an education’. This shift from the logic of *bildung* to that of ‘capital formation’ has caused a further decrease in enrollment in the arts and humanities. For example, as data supplied by the Canadian Association of University Teachers

suggests, the discipline of history has been particularly affected by these changes. At the same time that university enrollments were stable in Canada during the 1990s, the number of full-time students enrolled in history programs declined from 13452 in 1992 to 9111 in 1998—a 32% decline in only six years. Furthermore, university hiring practices have followed this trend. In 1992, there were 917 full-time history professors employed in Canadian universities. By 1999, that number had declined to 793—a 14% drop.

Finally, the quest for revenues has also led many universities to form ‘strategic partnerships’ with the private sector—in return for corporate donations, the universities promise to transform themselves into corporate training grounds by emphasizing the ‘marketable knowledges’ produced by the technical intelligentsia (computer and mechanical engineering, business management, accounting practices, policy analysis, commercial and property law, marketing and so on). Within such a utilitarian educational environment, the traditional humanistic arts of reading, remembering, interpreting and judging are seen as alternately ‘useless’ and ‘subversive’ of these increasing all-important corporate partnerships. The “David Noble Case” is instructive in this regard. Noble is an historian of technology who has been one of Canada’s most vociferous critics of so-called ‘e-learning’ and the corporatization of the university. In the spring of 2001, a search committee from the Faculty of Social Sciences at Simon Fraser University offered Noble the J.S. Woodsworth Chair in the Humanities in recognition of his outstanding body of work. Very soon thereafter, however, the upper administration of the university (which offers over 90 distance education courses each term) blocked the appointment, citing ‘serious errors in the department’s hiring procedure’ as the reason. However, according to

Noble and his supporters, the real reason was that he was being blackballed for his 'subversive' anti-technology and anti-corporate views. What is more, the "Noble case" is only one in a growing list of attempts by university administrators and their corporate partners to muzzle research and researchers which clash with their agendas (CAUT, 2002). Given this apparent trend, it is no surprise that some members of the humanistic class fraction would latch on to the discourse of the memory-crisis to reassert their usefulness and loyalty to the political and economic elite.

While I think that such an interpretation of the genesis of these recurrent memory-crises has some merit in that it speaks to the humanist intellectual's near-constant anxiety about her own marginality and her faith in the importance of continuing and sharing her intellectual pursuits. Left by itself, however, its one-to-one reduction of what we can only judge to be passionately and sincerely-held convictions to the defense of class position is as uncharitable as it is Procrustean. In "Our History Syllabus Has Us Gasping", Ken Osborne suggests a more palatable and parsimonious explanation: the fear of change, death and the inexorable passage of time. As he explains, in all of the various iterations of the memory-crisis, "the worriers were usually middle-aged or older, usually from central Canada, out of sympathy with the world which they saw taking shape around them, and fearful that the world they knew and cherished would not survive them—unless, of course, history were properly taught" (Osborne, 2000: 406). In other words, the discourse of the memory-crisis is inherently nostalgic and mythic. In the face of what it constructs as an incoherent and evanescent present and a future whose opacity permits of only one certainty—death, the knowable and glorious past is called upon to slow the passage of

time and to escape from the terror of history'. As Jörn Rüsen argues in "Historical Narration: Foundation, Types, Reasoning", the most radical experience of time is death and history "is a response to this challenge: it is an interpretation of the threatening experience of time. It overcomes uncertainty by seeing a meaningful pattern in the course of time... This pattern gives a sense to history" (Rüsen, 1987: 88). In the discourse of the memory-crisis, therefore history is called upon by the nation's elder generation to play a monumental role—to preserve in static form the memory and values of the Canada which they brought into existence and which they fear will pass out of existence when they do.

The Heritage Project

We can also see this plurality of sacred and profane motives in what will be the main focus of the final three chapters of this thesis: the Heritage Minutes. These are sixty 60-second historical vignettes that seek to dramatize various personages and events from Canada's past and are frequently shown on Canadian TV and movie theatres. The Heritage Minutes were the brainchild of Charles Bronfman's CRB Foundation—a charitable foundation set up in 1986 with the proceeds of the sale of the Montreal Expos. This foundation was given a dual mission: to strengthen Canadian identity and to strengthen unity among the world's Jewish peoples. In 1987, galvanized by the Order of Canada that he was awarded in that year as well as the stories of the interesting Canadians that he met at the reception, Bronfman decided that the former part of that mission would be the Heritage Project. While part of that project would be the sponsorship of annual 'heritage fairs' across Canada, its most prominent contribution to Canadian public life would be the Heritage Minutes. As Patrick Watson, ex-CBC mandarin and creative

director of the CRB Foundation, explained in an interview, the Minutes were born of Bronfman's desire to give something back to the nation and his fear and anxiety that the Canada that had made him wealthy and powerful "is dying of ignorance".

In order to accomplish his mission of rescuing Canada from its collective amnesia, Bronfman assembled around him a group of cultural nationalist intellectuals and broadcasters like Patrick Watson, Laurier LaPierre, Tom Axworthy (political scientist, brother of Lloyd Axworthy and former aide to Pierre Trudeau), Robert-Guy Scully (television host and producer) and Robert Rabinovitch (the current president of the CBC) to act as writers, creative directors, producers, financial officers and so on for the Heritage Project as well as a handful of historians like John Thompson and André Caron who acted, in Watson's words, as "the truth police" in the production of Minutes. When they began to produce the Minutes in the 1980s, they faced two main obstacles: high production costs and the prohibitive costs of buying screen time. Attracting corporate sponsors like Power Corporation, BCE and Canada Post who could write off their contributions as charitable donations solved the first problem. The second problem had to be solved by more ingenious methods. Michael Levine, a prominent Toronto-based entertainment lawyer and the CRB's legal counsel, successfully petitioned the CRTC to have the Minutes classified as 'historical dramas' by arguing that they told scripted stories employing actors, costumes and sets and were made by prominent Canadian film makers like Patrick Watson, Robert-Guy Scully and Al Waxman. This had two main ramifications: first of all, it meant that television stations would be credited with a minute and a half of Canadian content every time they broadcast a Heritage Minute. Secondly, it meant that the corporate logos

displayed at the end of each Minute were classified not as advertising but as production credits. For television stations, this meant that they could also show the Minutes without biting into their allotted commercial time and that, furthermore, the CRB Foundation would not have to pay stations to broadcast them. Instead, they were provided to stations free of charge as effective schedule-fillers and ways to fulfill Canadian content requirements.

In 1999, the Heritage Project was incorporated into a new and expanded charitable foundation called Historica. This foundation was created by Red Wilson (who was then chairman of BCE) who shared Bronfman's view that 'Canada is dying of ignorance' and Bronfman's desire to keep alive the version of Canada that supported his own rise to economic and political power. In his speech announcing the formation of Historica, Wilson argued that "I am not an historian or a professional educator. But as a father I am profoundly concerned about how we are "transmitting the cultural heritage, inspiring pride in the past, encouraging reasonable loyalty, and fostering the development of responsible democratic citizens". In this time of crisis, he argues, Canada needs the private sector to step up and provide Canadians with the cultural and technological resources they need to understand their collective past because "we can't make proper decisions about people, about projects or about the well-being of the community without understanding the context of those decisions" (Wilson, 1999). Wilson's initiative has been remarkably successful. Among its corporate partners, Historica lists prominent Canadian corporations like BCE, Canwest Global, CN, Daimler-Chrysler, Dupont, Imperial Tobacco, McCain, Petro-Canada, the Royal Bank, Telus and many others. Its board of directors is similarly

impressive. Its current chairman is John Cleghorn (the retired CEO of the Royal Bank) and its board of directors is composed of other luminaries such as Charles Bronfman, Peter Lougheed (best known as the Premier of Alberta 1971-85), Trina McQueen (recently retired president and COO of CTV), Avie Bennett (Chairman of the Board of McClelland & Stewart), former Chief Justice Antonio Lamer, Frank McKenna (former Premier of New Brunswick), Yves Fortier (chairman and senior partner, Ogilvy, Renault) and David Asper (executive, Global Canwest). Furthermore, along with taking over the production of the Heritage Minutes, this strange concatenation of neo-liberal corporate executives and cultural nationalist intellectuals and broadcasters sponsors 'Heritage Fairs', it has created a new website on Canada's past (www.histori.ca), made available new teaching materials for primary and secondary school teachers and undertaken initiatives such as making the Canadian Encyclopedia available on-line.

Secret State Involvement

The production of the Heritage Minutes has traditionally been characterized as a mainly private and charitable initiative. As such, it seems to mark a fundamental shift in the relationship between nationalism, culture, the private sector and the state. As Kevin Dowler argues in "The Cultural Industries Policy Apparatus" (1996), the Canadian state has recurrently felt compelled to undertake the construction of a national transportation and communications infrastructure as a result of the inability or unwillingness of the Canadian private sector to do so itself. While this was often done under the rubric of "nation-building", the latter motive was conjoined by concerns over security: the railroad, the CBC, ANIK-1 and so on were all trumpeted as technologies that would help Canada

to establish its sovereignty over the land (and thus ward off American annexation) as well as to neutralize potential internal threats to “national unity” such as Quebec nationalism, western regionalism and so on. However, Dowler notes, there was a recurrent irony in this project: “the attempts to consolidate the Canadian state through space-binding technologies in the end only generated further dependency... The two-way structure of the transportation system... lays the nation open to the influx of less-expensive foreign manufactured goods” (Dowler, 1996: 332).

Given the fact that the construction of the transportation and communications infrastructure seemed to, in fact, reduce the Canadian state’s ability to secure its own borders, the state shifted its hope in the mid-20th century to culture as the means of establishing its sovereignty. As Dowler writes, it came to be held that “the central problematic of liberal governance—*omnium et singularum*, the simultaneous ordering of the individual and the whole—is to be solved through the regimen of culture. Each is to have a cultural identity through the process of *Bildung* or self-formation, organized by pedagogical strategies through centralized national programs, and collectively, a Canadian culture, by virtue of the uniformity provided by cultural agencies offering programs of nationwide scope” (Dowler, 1996: 339). As Michael Dorland argues in “Cultural Industries and the Canadian Experience”, this conflation of cultural development with the defense of territorial security in the discourse of Canadian cultural policy “made media programming a test of political loyalty. Given such a discursive framework, the potential economic challenge posed by the development of private Canadian cultural industries was always open to rhetorical attack as a covert conduit not only for American media interests,

but also for “American” forms of programming” (Dorland, 1996: 355). The most famous expression of this cultural nationalist rhetoric of loyalty and disloyalty was Graham Spry’s famous slogan: “The State or the United States”. In this slogan, the public sector is identified as the sole defender of Canadian culture against the incursions of the American behemoth and/or its fifth column within Canadian society: the Canadian private sector.

Given these traditional associations of the public sector with the defense of Canadian culture in the face of “the American threat” and the private sector as a ‘comprador elite’ facilitating the erosion of Canadian cultural sovereignty, the Heritage Project and *Historica* seem to represent an interesting shift in this pattern. In the same ways as the policing of urban space is increasingly being managed by private security companies, these endeavors seem to mark the privatization of the Canadian state’s self-appointed mandate of the policing of culture and production of a “policed” culture that would be disseminated on a nation-wide scale (Dorland, 1998). However, recent revelations have suggested that this project marks only a few tentative steps in that direction. In May of 2000, “l’affaire Scully” set the Quebec media astir with tales of Robert-Guy Scully (the director and producer of many of the *Minutes*) and the CRB Foundation receiving secret funding from Heritage Canada and the Canadian Information Office (described by one journalist as “virtually a propaganda tool of the federal government”) for the Heritage Project as well as a show called *Le Canada du Millénaire*. More specifically, it was revealed that the Heritage project received more than \$7 million over six years from Canadian Heritage and that Scully’s private production company had received a \$1.2 million unannounced grant from the Canadian Information Office for Le

Canada du Millenaire—a show designed to celebrate the achievements of prominent Canadian and Québécois personalities. In the case of the alleged secret funding to the Heritage Project, both the CRB and Canadian Heritage have insisted that this money was given with no strings attached and that they made no particular attempt to keep the funding secret. However, as the CBC's ombudsman David Bazay noted laconically in his review of 'l'affaire Scully': "it appears that neither Canadian Heritage nor the CRB Foundation ever issued a press release announcing the funding." (Bazay, 2001: 11)

Given this history of heavy corporate involvement and secret state funding, it is hard for anyone who is trained in the tradition of critical communication studies not to view the Heritage Minutes with jaundiced eyes. Our initial reflex is to dismiss them as overt attempts at propaganda designed to satisfy a wide variety of cynical and self-interested motives. For the corporations and members of the capitalist elite involved, these motives range from reifying the existing political-economic order of things to reassuring legislators, regulatory bodies, competition tribunals and the Canadian public that they are committed members of 'Team Canada, Inc.' to claiming their funding of the 'Heritage Minutes' as tax write-offs and using the Minutes as a means of escaping otherwise onerous Canadian content regulations. For the federal government, only one motive needs to be cited: propaganda.

Furthermore, one does not have to look very hard for evidence to support such a cynical reading of the self-interested motives of the supporters of the Minutes. For example, in a 1996 submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters began by arguing

“Broadcasting is not a portable business, to be moved off-shore when times are uncertain. When Canada does well, we do well” (CAB, 1996). In order to protect their investment, they continued, broadcasters have joined the federal government “promoting awareness of the common values and achievements which have made Canada the envy of the world, and which form the threads that link us, to one to the other, and make us a nation” (CAB, 1996). Not surprisingly, one of the main “threads” they cite is the Heritage Minutes which they “enthusiastically support...because we firmly believe they help build and foster a spirit of community and country, the foundation of our national identity and character” (CAB, 1996). In CAB’s submission, the logics of market protection and nation building are cynically twinned with the Heritage Minutes. In so doing, the CAB seems to provide unwitting confirmation for Marx’s observation in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte (1852) that for the “market and its priests in every epoch, stability of state power was all the law and the prophets” (Marx, 1996: 100).

This cynicism is also shared by most of those who have written on the subject as well. The most sustained and controversial critique of the Heritage Minutes took the form of a book written by the Québécois journalist Normand Lester titled Le Livre Noir du Canada Anglais. Until November 18, 2001, Lester was a prominent investigative journalist who enjoyed a 35-year career with Radio-Canada. However, in the spring of 2000, his relationship with Radio-Canada’s upper management grew strained as a result of Lester’s insistence on revealing the secret funding of the Heritage Minutes by the Canadian state. Upon learning of Lester’s discovery, Radio-Canada’s upper management immediately sought to quash the story by first ordering Lester to drop the investigation and then

shifting him from an onscreen role to doing editing and voice-overs. In spite of this attempted muzzling, the story got out and was picked up by other Quebec media organizations.

The result of the public revelation of “L’Affaire Scully” was the focus of unwanted media attention in French Quebec on the political project of the Heritage Minutes. In a series of articles on the issue published in La Presse in June 2000, for example, Nathalie Petrowski described them as “des petits bijoux de propagande canadienne”. She then pointed out how the \$7 million in government funding which these films received was the largest sum ever awarded to a Canadian film production venture and how this funding was secured by short-circuiting traditional review processes. Instead, she writes, the CRB Foundation’s executive committee “went directly to Canadian Heritage where they did not have to wait or take a number before they received their first million” (Petrowski, 2000:2, my translation). Finally, she also suggested that not only did the dictates of securing ‘national unity’ demand the suspension of public review processes in the case of how the Minutes were funded, the attempt by Radio-Canada’s upper management to suppress the story was similarly antidemocratic. Their actions, she suggests, put the ‘unifying’ interests of the federal government before the public’s interest.

“L’Affaire Lester” and the Politics of National Unity

As Marc Raboy details in Missed Opportunities (1990), the apparent tension within Radio-Canada between the public interest and the *realpolitik* of national unity brought to light by “L’Affaire Scully” dates back at least to the early 1960s. In that period, Raboy explains, Radio-Canada approached the reporting of national issues “from a

position of “public” rather than “national” interest—that is, it sought to clarify and broaden the parameters of debate in the perceived interests of its constituency rather than promote a particular position” (Raboy, 1990: 138-39). However, the rise of Quebec nationalism in the early 1960s and the willingness of Radio-Canada to give air time to separatists such as René Levesque caused the federal government to seek to redefine “the public” in a decidedly self-serving way. As Raboy argues, from this period onwards, “the public” increasingly came to be identified with “the nation” in the federal government’s discourse on public broadcasting. The 1963 Fowler Commission, for example, witnessed the redefinition of the role of broadcasting from one defined by the Massey Commission as being to inform, enlighten, entertain and sell goods to the Canadian public to “to inform, enlighten and entertain the Canadian people *and promote their national unity*” (quoted in Raboy, 1990: 163, my italics). In this redefinition, two important things occur. First of all, broadcasting and especially public broadcasting is assigned the task of nation-building. Secondly, this program of cultural reconstruction is accompanied by an apparent act of scapegoating: the idea that broadcasting should serve commercial interests mysteriously disappears. While this is purely speculation, such a silence could be “payback” for what Canadian cultural nationalist discourse constructs as corporate Canada’s disloyalty.

Interestingly enough, Raboy identifies one key set of events as being the catalyst for the legislative enshrinement of this new equation of “the public” and “the nation” in Canadian cultural policy discourse. This set of events was the airing on the English CBC of a weekly public affairs program called “This Hour Has Seven Days”. This show first went on air in 1964 and was characterized by an iconoclastic and irreverent approach to

controversial national issues that mixed journalism and entertainment. As Patrick Watson, who co-hosted the show with Laurier LaPierre (both of whom would go on to play important roles in the Heritage Project thirty years later), testified before a parliamentary committee, this show was based on a philosophy of broadcasting that stressed that the role of broadcasting is to stimulate public debate and not to catechize. If public broadcasting is to unite the country, its role is “not to propagandize, not to shout “Hurrah, it is a great country and we are all in it together,” but rather to meet the people where they are with ideas which they can think about and use...in this way a dialogue will ensue, a conversation which they know is being shared across the country” (quoted in Raboy, 1990: 166). In other words, as Lapierre told the same committee, their goal was to “change the [national] monologue into a dialogue” (ibid.). (There is a certain irony in all of this—while Watson and LaPierre rejected a propagandistic and jingoist approach to unity-building in their youth, they seem to have firmly embraced it in the intervening years).

This dialogic approach to broadcasting proved to be very popular with Canadian viewers. Raboy reports that “the public, as audience, watched “Seven Days” in unprecedented numbers for a public affairs program” (Raboy, 1990: 167). However, By 1966, Watson and LaPierre were dismissed and the show was canceled because CBC’s management grew “increasingly nervous with controversial programs that attracted criticism” (Raboy, 1990: 165). The official rationale was clearly expressed by H.G. Walker, the head of network broadcasting for the English CBC, who told a parliamentary committee set up to investigate this cancellation that the CBC could not tolerate “constant challenges to basic ethics, standards, policies, and all of the old-fashioned things like

respect for personal privacy, good taste, integrity and so on.” (quoted in Raboy, 1990: 167). However, as Watson reported to the same committee, he was told privately by CBC’s upper management that other considerations were equally important in their decision. As Raboy reports, first of all: “He was told that...” “I do not know whether you believe in Canada or not you have got to believe in Canada if you are going to take on such a project”” (Raboy, 1990: 165). Secondly, Watson reported to the committee that “CBC management seemed to consider public affairs programming in general as “trouble making” and was concerned to do away with “trouble makers””(ibid.).

Raboy reports that by 1968, CBC management’s desire to muzzle troublemakers and to ensure that employees of the corporation publicly express their loyalty to Canada had spread to the federal Liberal government. In that year, the secretary of state Judy LaMarsh introduced a new Broadcasting Act. According to Raboy, this act redefined the role of the CBC and Radio-Canada by introducing a new subclause that asserted that “the national broadcasting service should... contribute to the development of national unity and provide for a continuing expression of Canadian identity” (quoted in Raboy, 1990: 176). In the parliamentary debates on this proposed act, members of the Opposition and even some Liberal back-benchers pointed out the repressive possibilities in this redefinition of the CBC’s mandate. NDP critic R.W. Prittie, for example, argued that “I would not want to see a witch-hunt started because there is something in a bill saying that national unity must be promoted which would enable the government to go to anyone who was not doing exactly what was wanted and say: You are not promoting national unity; you are a separatist and therefore you are out. There is a possible danger there” (ibid.)

This “possible danger” to which Twitney and others sought to alert his fellow parliamentarians the Canadian public in 1968 seems to have been realized in November 2001 with the publication of Lester’s book. As Lester explains in his introduction to the book, he composed it with an explicitly polemical intent as “ma réponse aux Minutes du Patrimoine (the Heritage Minutes). Une enquête journalistique sur le côté noir, le côté sanglant de l’histoire du Canada. Un démenti au mensonge par omission que constitue ce project de lessivage historique” (Lester, 2001: 27). Put briefly, the main thesis of Lester’s book runs as follows: “Depuis la Conquête, le Canada anglais s’est rendu coupable des crimes, de violations des droits humains, de manifestations de racisme et d’exclusion envers tous ceux qui n’avaient pas le bonheur d’être Blancs, Anglo-Saxons et protestants” (ibid.). Given this starting point, it is no surprise that the book’s 300-odd pages are taken up with cataloguing English Canada’s crimes ranging from the ongoing attempts to assimilate French Canada, its anti-Semitism and its disgraceful treatment of Canadian aboriginals and ethnic minorities.

When it was first published in November 2001, the book immediately raised a public furor. Lester was alternately lionized by Quebec nationalists as a hero who successfully slew the federalist leviathan in order to release the truth from its bondage or demonized by federalists as a dangerous and deluded demagogue who seeks to whip up dormant ethnic nationalist stirrings in Quebec. He was almost immediately suspended (with pay) from Radio-Canada on the grounds that he had breached impartiality clauses in the network’s code of ethics. Several days after his suspension, he agreed to an early retirement package. In Quebec, Lester’s suspension was met with outrage. Editorials in

support of Lester's freedom of self-expression were published in the major Quebec dailies, public protests by students and sovereigntist groups were immediately organized.

Furthermore, La Fédération professionnelle des journalistes du Québec lodged an official grievance with Radio-Canada on the grounds that Lester's book was 'un geste démocratique' and that "l'histoire n'appartient à personne et que tous ont le droit de l'étudier, de l'analyser, de la commenter et de l'interpréter. Cela fait partie du débat."

Given the Canadian state's (and its presumably 'arm's length' relationship with the CBC/Radio Canada) historical predilection for 'social cohesion' and 'national unity' over freedom of expression, the public interest and other such democratic necessities, Lester's suspension and subsequent dismissal from Radio-Canada was, while disappointing, unsurprising. A little more surprising was the fate of Robert McKenzie. Until January 21, 2002, McKenzie worked as the Toronto Star's Quebec reporter for 37 years. This long career came to a crashing end as a result of a speech at a meeting of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste (SSJB) that McKenzie gave in support of Lester. In that speech, McKenzie praised Lester's book and noted that while critics were quick to accuse Lester of racism and demagoguery, "personne, à ce que je sache, n'a pris Normand Lester en défaut sur un seul fait majeur". Furthermore, along with his support of Lester, McKenzie had some poignant things to say in his speech about the English Canadian media's relationship to Quebec. The English Canadian media, he argued, consistently 'demonizes' Québécois culture. The result of this pattern of demonization, he argues, is a sense of smug moral superiority on the part of English Canadians and an unwillingness to listen and engage with those Québécois who do not toe the federalist line. The English Canadian media,

he asserts, treats all pronouncements from Quebec nationalists with “zéro présomption de bonne foi, zéro bénéfice du doute, tous les Talibans en puissance. Caricature du Toronto Star: Oussama Ben Landry”. Ironically enough, he notes, in spite of its official editorial policy of ‘intolerance’ of Quebec nationalists, it is the English Canadian media that constantly uses the accusation of racism and ethnic nationalism to describe Quebec.

The subsequent reaction to McKenzie’s speech by the management of the Toronto Star seemed to confirm something which Lester wrote in the introduction to his book: “Le Canada anglais n’est pas vraiment une société réputée pour ses capacités d’autocritique” (Lester, 2001: 22). In spite of the fact that he was officially on vacation and speaking as a ‘private citizen’ when he gave the speech, McKenzie was told by the Star on January 21 that his services were no longer required and that the paper would immediately shut down its Montreal bureau. While the official reason given for his dismissal was that McKenzie violated the paper’s policy that any of its journalists giving public talks must first get permission from their superiors, McKenzie suspected a different reason. He reported to the SSJB that the real reason for his dismissal was that his speech enraged John Honderich, the Star’s chief editor and a strong supporter of the federal Liberal party.

The English Canadian Reaction

While these events raised an outcry in Quebec media circles, they barely registered on the English Canadian media radar screen. McKenzie’s dismissal seems not to have been mentioned by any of the major English Canadian dailies and discussion of “L’affaire Lester” followed an eminently predictable path. Writers like Allan Fotheringham and William Johnson in the Globe and Mail and Norman Webster in the Montreal Gazette fell

all over themselves in a competition to see who could do the best job of dismissing Lester's book. For their part, Webster and Johnson concentrated on ad hominem attacks. In true patronizing fashion, Webster, for example, does everything he can to portray Lester as a petulant child and his book as a "juvenile temper tantrum" while Johnson dismisses him as "just a demagogue". Furthermore, Webster also tries to downplay the importance of the historical events that Lester discusses in his book. While he admits that much of Lester's history is true, he then suggests its irrelevance in the present. As he argues, while English Canada might have dealt with Quebec unfairly in the past, that is all behind us because "Quebec's influence in Canada, its control over its internal affairs and its buttressing of the French language have taken huge leaps in recent decades" (Webster, 2001). This strategy of proclaiming the irrelevance of the shameful past is shared by Allan Fotheringham who suggests that Quebec should be happy with its current levels of power and influence in all aspect of the federal government and forget about all of that other stuff. In other words, this response suggests a profound ambivalence in English Canadian culture to its own past—only the glorious past is celebrated and the shameful past is rejected as irrelevant.

In the final sentence of his article on this issue, Fotheringham goes on to make an even more troubling assertion. He writes that "If Lester is to be suspended, it should be for writing a bad book" (Fotheringham, 2001). Leaving aside the question of how one defines a 'bad book', Fotheringham's response seems to once again confirm one of Lester's contentions about English Canada. English Canadians, he writes, are great democrats. They have "un attachement sans faille aux institutions démocratiques, pourvu

qu'elles soient sous leur contrôle et qu'elles protègent leurs intérêts" (Lester, 2001: 109).

In the Lester case, a fellow journalist is suspended for writing what others like Fotheringham deem to be a 'bad book' and the question of freedom of expression (one of the fundamental democratic principles) is barely even raised in the English Canadian media. What is worse, when the issue of Lester's suspension does sneak its way into the English Canadian discussion of the matter, most simply report it without comment or, like Fotheringham, seem to be absolutely nonplussed about the potential violation of his freedom to speak. Democracy, it would seem, is important for the mainstream English Canadian press only as long as it serves English Canadian hegemonic interests.

That said, there are notable exceptions. In an editorial published in the Globe and Mail on November 26, 2001, Lysianne Gagnon argued that while she does accept Radio-Canada's decision to suspend Lester for violating its code of ethics about the need for reporters to remain impartial on controversial subjects, she suggests that if it wanted to be consistent, the CBC should have also applied the same rules to people like Patrick Watson and Robert Scully who were at once employees of the crown corporation and contributors to the Heritage Project. Apparently, one can be a Canadian nationalist and retain one's 'impartiality' but once one embraces Quebec nationalism, 'partiality' and 'bias' rules the day. To put it differently, it is eminently 'reasonable' to be a Canadian nationalist but irrational and atavistic to be a Quebec nationalist.

In an editorial in The National Post, on the other hand, Paul Wells bucks the Anglo-Canadian trend by setting out to defend Lester's right to free speech. He begins his piece by making it clear that he is no big fan of Lester's book per se. While he sees some

merit in the book as a remedy to a 'holier-than-thou' tendency within English Canada that identifies racism and xenophobia primarily as someone else's problem, he agrees with Fotheringham that it is a 'bad book' riddled with factual and interpretive errors. Unlike Fotheringham, however, he questions the idea that writing a bad book is grounds for a suspension. In Voltairean fashion, he writes that we must defend the "freedom to do sloppy research and reach boneheaded conclusions" because "if employers were to begin punishing journalists for writing bad books, none of us would be safe. The state broadcaster has a special mandate, or should have, to avoid any appearance that it imposes state ideology on its craftsmen" (Wells, 2001).

The Critical Response to the Heritage Minutes

While Lester's book and especially the reaction it prompted once again underline the centrality of the politics of memory to the struggle for hegemony in the Canadian federation, other writings on the Heritage Minutes also contain some valuable insights into the aims and motives behind their production. Surprisingly, in spite of their ubiquity, the Heritage Minutes have not attracted much in the way of critical attention. While a web search will reveal a handful of articles written by high school history teachers and other members of the Canadian 'heritage industry' which typically praises them in heroic terms (for example, "a brave and bold attempt to fight fire with fire and recover some small shred of our national identity" (Logan & Waxman: 1), there is a relative paucity of writings on the subject by professional critics. However, several other important articles on the Heritage Minutes have been written. I will briefly review their main arguments because each contains valuable insights into the question of how to read the 'Minutes'.

“Ambushed by Patriotism: the wit, wisdom and wimps of Heritage Minutes” is written by Elspeth Cameron and Janice Dickin McGinnis and was originally published in the left-nationalist magazine *Canadian Forum*. According to the authors, the Minutes succeed in grabbing us ‘by our patriotic throats’ because “they function as ‘cues’... activating convictions that Canadians hold dear” (Cameron and Dickin McGinnis, 2002: 389). They go on to catalogue several such core Canadian ‘myths’ represented by various Minutes—the primacy of collective action over individual heroism, of evolution over revolution, of self-control (‘peace, order and good government’) over violence and, of course, Canada’s moral and intellectual superiority to our southern neighbours. In their concluding section, they begin by voicing some critical concerns that the Minutes are little more than ‘feel-good-agit-prop’ that greatly oversimplify a complex reality but, in the end, they end up at least cautiously supporting them. Reasoning that the ‘Minutes’ have been written in consultation with ‘experts’ as well as ‘the community’ and ‘the public’ (whatever those are), they conclude: “the images in the Heritage Minutes are ours” (Cameron and Dickin McGinnis, 2002: 391). Furthermore, by placing ‘our’ image before us, the Minutes open up the opportunity “to articulate and shape our identity” (ibid.).

By and large, like Lester, other writings on the subject reject the sanguine conclusion of Cameron and Dickin McGinnis by raising the very important question of who is the ‘we’ whose heritage the Minutes celebrate. In “Up for Sale: the Commodification of Canadian Culture”, Katarzyna Rukszto describes the Minutes as possessing a thinly veiled bellicosity in that they are “silently couched against the forces of plural narratives and critiques of the nation” (Rukszto, 2002: 394). The Minutes, she

argues, attempt to construct the national past as one of growing 'unity' by systematically ignoring past and present voices that are "intent on making their particularity within the Canadian nation-state known" (ibid.). The result of this negation of difference is the reinforcement of the 'whiteness' of what she calls 'the DNA of Canadian culture and heritage'. As she points out, 42 of the 52 Minutes which she viewed were "stories of white heroism, adventure and contributions to the nation" (Rukszto, 2002: 395). Furthermore, in the Minutes in which non-whites appear, they were either shown to be the beneficiaries of white liberality or their difference "was stripped of all oppositional traits" (ibid.).

While Rukszto concentrated on the silences around the issue of race, David LeDoyen points out another important silence in "*Ce pays a oublié son XVIIIe siècle*". As the title of his article on the Heritage Minutes suggests, LeDoyen argues that the Minutes entirely carve the entire eighteenth century out of the Canadian national narrative. Significant events like the Peace of Montreal in 1701 (which marked the decline of Iroquois power in eastern Canada), the Conquest, the American Revolution, the struggle over the Quebec Act, the coming of the Loyalists and so on are not commemorated in any of the Minutes in spite of the fact that they marked what LeDoyen calls 'the genesis of Canada and all of its historical problems'. The reason it does this is that they seek to avoid the fact that, in Canada, "*la violence fait autant partie de son histoire que de celle du toute autre contrée*" (LeDoyen, 1998: 2). Furthermore, when violence is presented, it is banalized by being presented as either something external to Canadian society (typically in the form of American aggression) or it is recuperated as in the case of the Minute detailing the hanging of Louis Riel in which the message is forwarded that "*la mort de Riel est un*

tache sur notre histoire, mais nous avons compris et nous concrétisons maintenant ses idéaux” (ibid.). As a result of their ‘bad faith’ about Canada’s violent past, he concludes, the Heritage Minutes are constructed through the nostalgic eyes of their producers: “édulcorée et incapable de voir l’histoire en face.” (LeDoyen, 1998: 3).

These reflections on the silences of the Minutes are echoed by Nicole Neatby in her critique of the Minutes in the Canadian Historical Review. She argues that their mission of instilling pride in Canadians tends “to make the audience feel good on shaky ground” (Neatby, 1998: 669) by presenting us with “a Whiggish interpretation of history” presents social contradictions like racism and sexism as ‘a thing of the past’. Not only do they help to expiate the conscience of white (and male) Canadians, they also work to reaffirm what they already believe. As Neatby explains, the Minutes “are not intended to provoke debates or raise questions about the status quo... Shying away from controversy explains why the majority of the *Heritage Minutes* deal with the safer distant past” (Neatby, 1998: 670). Finally, she points out that their focus on drama leads to an oversimplification of the past in which “grey areas have been either painted black and white or they have been ignored altogether” (ibid.). In her conclusion, Neatby ends by paying the Minutes the following backhanded compliment: “the feel good messages in the *Heritage Minutes* can provide very useful teaching tools for instructors bent on revealing the constraints placed on public historians of all stripes” (ibid.).

While Rukszto, LeDoyen and Neatby concentrated on pointing out the selective vision of Cameron and Dickin McGinniss’s “We”, Paul Webster suggests that the “we” comes from an even smaller section of Canadian society: namely Canada’s corporate

giants. He begins his essay by asking why Canadian corporate giants are pouring money into history. He begins by pointing out some of the more obviously mercenary reasons: public relations for restructuring and downsizing corporations, the quest for tax breaks, cheap content for their TV networks, work for their production companies and so on. He then focuses on the ideological reasons why corporate Canada has gotten behind the Minutes. As Rukszto also pointed out, lying at the heart of the narrative strategy of the Heritage Minutes is an attempt to silence competing narratives of the national past. For Webster, this cashes out in an attempt to turn back the clock and resuscitate the 'colony to nation' narrative of Canadian history which "promoted Canada as a story of conflict resolved: two nations, fused into a modern power on the world stage" (Webster, 2002: 397). For Canadian corporate nationalists, he argues, this narrative serves their hegemonic interests much better than the 'new social history' that had gained prominence in Canada after the 1960s. As Webster explains:

The new [social] historians focused on social themes: women, labour, the environment, minorities, immigrants and aboriginal people—narratives that had gone mostly untouched by older historians. While promoting a more diverse understanding of Canada's past, they began by downgrading their predecessors' ideas. Unifying notions such as the two founding nations, the concept of a classless society, the country where slavery never existed and where the wars were fought in noble ways for noble causes began to crumble. Confederation was no longer the cure for Conquest and colonialism (Webster, 2002: 398).

Since most of the Canadian historical profession seemed so adamant on teaching "the divisive stuff", Webster points out, *Historica* had to turn to a now familiar figure for its main historical consultant: Jack Granatstein. Furthermore, apart from Granatstein, no historians or teachers were invited to sit on its board. The Canadian corporate community,

Webster concludes, wanted to construct a very special 'We': one that best serves their political and economic interests by celebrating current Canadian social and political realities as the culmination of an ineluctable progressive movement towards harmony and prosperity in which conflict and want is 'a thing of the past'.

In the rest of this thesis, I will build upon the writings of Lester, Rukszto, LeDoyen and the rest by arguing that the Heritage Minutes represent an attempt by the Central Canadian elite to protect and legitimate the existing social, political and economic order of things by reconstructing the Canadian past in a manner that emphasizes its heroic and exemplary aspects and downplays historic and existing tensions and injustices. More specifically, I will argue that the Heritage Minutes follow the English-Canadian 'grand narrative' by plotting Canadian history primarily along romantic and comic lines as a history of 'overcoming' and 'reconciliation'. After an introductory discussion of the Canadian grand narrative and what I will call 'the media ideology' underlying the project, I will use the first of the two final chapters to discuss how the comic theme of 'reconciliation' is used in selected Minutes in hopes of suturing the fissures opened up in the Canadian body politic by the rise of 'identity politics' in Canada since the Second World War. In the second chapter, I will discuss how the romantic theme of 'overcoming' both natural and social impediments is used in other Minutes to lend support to corporate Canada's 'innovation agenda'. Furthermore, in both chapters, I will demonstrate the dark side of such "unifying" narratives: the production of unassimilable 'Others'.

Chapter 5: The Canadian Grand Narrative

As Patrick Watson revealed in “Minute by Minute” (see introduction), the Heritage Project is animated by the belief that the best way to resuscitate national memory would be to sell Canada to Canadians. In Watson’s words: “we have an interesting past and if we can sell soap in one-minute time slots, why can’t we do the same with our history?”. In asking this question, Watson reveals a great deal about the Heritage Project’s basic assumptions about its audience. In recent decades, an awareness has developed among theorists of communication that the production of meaning “is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant” (Volosinov, 1973: 86). In order to produce a message that is capable of convincing others, it is argued, the speaker must tailor that message to what she believes to be the main values and beliefs of her target audience. As Chaim Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca argue in The New Rhetoric (1969), every utterance, therefore, carries within it a “more or less systematized construction” of its audience based on what the speaker believes to be its main psychological and sociological attributes (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969: 20).

When we look at both the Heritage Minutes themselves and the discourse surrounding their production, it becomes quickly evident that their encoded audience is constructed along the lines of what John Hartley has called “the paedocratic regime”. In this regime of signification, Hartley argues, “The audience is imagined as having childlike attributes and qualities...even the smallest details of scripting, representation and semiosis are determined by the concept of a childlike audience” (Hartley, 1992: 108). According to

Hartley, this construction of the audience is necessitated by the need of television

producers to reach as large a population as possible. As he explains:

broadcasters paedocratize audiences in the name of pleasure. They appeal to the playful, imaginative, fantasy, irresponsible aspects of adult behaviour. They seek the common personal ground that invites diverse and often directly antagonistic groupings in a given population. (Hartley, 1992: 111)

If we further examine the discourse surrounding the production of the Minutes, we don't have to look far to appreciate the paedocratic nature of their constructed audience. While they are explicitly aimed at adolescents and pre-adolescents, this discourse has a tendency to infantilize all potential viewers of the Minutes. As a general rule, the intended audience of the Minutes is described as being ignorant, responsive only to slick Hollywood-style production values and incapable of concentrating on one thing for more than a minute. In implicitly asserting the ignorance of their intended audience, the makers of the Minutes generally muster two forms of evidence. The first is the use of opinion polls that reveal Canadian's dearth of historical knowledge. For example, in a speech given to the Canadian Club in 1998, Tom Axworthy, the executive director of the Heritage Project and, more recently, Historica cited a Dominion Institute-sponsored poll which revealed, among other horrors, that "only 54% of the respondents knew that Sir John A. MacDonald was our first prime minister" (Axworthy, 1998: 20). The second form of evidence is more anecdotal and rests on the argument that prolonged exposure to American media results in Canadian national amnesia. As Red Wilson put it in his speech announcing the creation of Historica: "By the age of 12, a Canadian child will have spent more time watching TV and surfing the net than in a classroom. Much of what is available

on television does not reflect Canadian realities” (Wilson, 1999: 7). In an Internet article on the Minutes, Bob Logan and Al Waxman make explicit what is implied in Wilson’s speech: “The American networks...easily target Canadian heritage for takeover. American TV has sucked out our brains, stripped away our identity...” (Logan & Waxman, 1998: 1).

Once the ignorance of the audience is established, the discussion typically shifts to the best way to persuade it to learn about its neglected heritage. First of all, there is the assertion that Canada’s past must be encoded in the ‘native’ language of the audience. As Patrick Watson reported to the CBC’s ombudsman in his investigation of “L’affaire Scully”, this meant borrowing the codes of popular and commodity culture. Similarly, Wilson argues that they chose to represent Canada’s past in the form of TV commercials and, more recently, a website because such a representation “fits more comfortably with [the audience’s] view of the world, their reality” (Wilson, 1999: 7). Again, Logan and Waxman make explicit much of what is merely implied in this train of thought. They describe the Heritage Minutes as a heroic attempt to fight “fire with fire—trying to win back a measure of our lost Canadian identity using the medium most responsible for its loss. [Marshall McLuhan] would also have supported the use of the one-minute format—an electronic one-liner—as an effective strategy for gaining the attention of a generation whose psyche and attention span has been beaten down and destroyed by television, drug abuse, the fast life, rock music and videos” (Logan & Waxman, 1998: 2).

In the above citation, we can see how the construction of the audience also implies a construction of the media or what I will call a ‘media ideology’. “Media ideology” is an adaptation of the concept of “language ideology” which has gained prominence in

contemporary sociolinguistic thought. As Kathryn Woolard and Bambi Schieffelin explain it, the concept of language ideology is inspired by Raymond Williams' observation that "a definition of language is always, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world" (quoted in Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994: 56). More specifically, they argue that language ideology can be defined as "the cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests" (ibid.). In other words, every culture has one or more set of ideas that its members use to both describe and prescribe how they interact with one another.

While sociolinguists are primarily concerned with instances of verbal communication, from our above example, it is easy to see how this idea could easily be adapted to serve the needs of students of the media. Every representation of the media, I will argue, seeks to describe either one medium or the differences between the media as well as the characteristics of the 'typical' user of each medium. At the same time as they describe the media, however, media ideologies also tend to prescribe how the media should be properly used and it is this prescriptive aspect that tends to inspire and inform specific criticisms of existing media usage. For example, as we see from the Logan quote, he holds what could be described as a Leavisite media ideology that views the electronic media as a vector of stupefaction and Americanization. This ideology also entails a very specific figuration of the audience as infantilized, anomic, vacant, illiterate, uncivilized and responsive only to bright lights and loud noises. Not only does such a media ideology provide its adherents with a vocabulary to describe both the electronic media and its

audiences, it also prescribes for them a moral duty/civilizing mission: to rescue the befuddled masses from the amnesiac forces of the electronic media.

When discussing media ideology, the importance of being explicit in making a distinction between the representation of the electronic and more traditional forms of the media cannot be overstated. This is the case because most media ideologies carry within them a reading of the history of the media in which the invention of each new medium is generally viewed as having profound effects both on the society at large and on the social status of existing media. For example, as Jacques Derrida has argued, within Western culture, speech has often been prioritized over writing on the basis of its truth being guaranteed by the 'presence' of the speaker. Once words are decoupled from their speaker and mediated by writing, however, lies, ambiguity and confusion come to the fore. In other words, this particular media ideology emplots the history of the media and the history of western society as one of continuous movement away from the 'authentic', the 'original' and so on towards 'mediation', 'simulation' and so on and this movement is generally assumed to have catastrophic political, social and cultural effects.

In the media ideology that informs the production of the Heritage Minutes, a nostalgic reading of the history of the media (and media audiences) takes center stage. As the Logan quote above suggests (and people like Axworthy, Wilson and Watson have expressed similar ideas, albeit in a more restrained way), those behind the Heritage Project tend to somehow believe that before the rise of the electronic media, in the good old days when the book reigned supreme, Canada was a unified country with a strong sense of its own identity and history. Our national fall from grace occurred with the invention of the

electronic media (especially television). In order to restore us to our state of grace, we must use the tools of the devil against him by using these amnesiac and stupefying media to teach what would have once been the purview of 'book-learning'—the national heritage. As Toby Miller argues in The Well-Tempered Self, this simultaneous lament over the distorting and stupefying power of the electronic media and the optimism that it can also be used to counter that distortion and stupefaction has deep roots in western 'governmental' thought. The creation of 'public service' media institutions like the BBC and the CBC, he argues, is predicated on the seemingly contradictory claim that "television is one of the villains, so television must be given a position of trust to take advantage of its abilities and make it responsible" (Miller, 1993: 133). As Logan puts it, the Heritage Minutes attempt to 'fight fire with fire' by harnessing the electronic media's powers of persuasion to the goal of recovering 'some small shred of our national identity'.

A quick glance at any of the Heritage Minutes will reveal how the strategy of 'fighting fire with fire' manifests itself. First of all, they are only 60 seconds long. Officially, the justification for this is that this format allowed them to be more broadly aired because network programmers could squeeze them in between regularly scheduled programs. However, I would suggest that this choice of format has as much to do with the media ideology governing their production. Having constructed Canadian youth as 'savages' suffering from a collective case of attention deficit disorder, it then makes sense to market Canada to them in short vignettes. Similarly, the Minutes are shot on 35 mm film and are credited with having the high production values which are associated with Hollywood programming (a person who worked on the production of one of the Minutes

once told me that they were known in Montreal media production circles as “the million-dollar minutes”). As Elspeth Cameron and Janice Dickin McGinnis argue, “one of the reasons the Minutes succeed is their use of slick techniques associated with American high-tech production values” (Cameron & Dickin McGinnis, 2002: 389).

Furthermore, even the plots of most of the Minutes are structured in a manner which paedocratize their audience. As Hartley argues in his discussion of paedocratization, television producers infantilize their audiences by using plot lines typically drawn from children’s theatre to suggest that complex issues are amenable to simple solutions and neat resolutions. As Patrick Watson, the writer of many of the Minutes explains in Minute by Minute, each Minute begins with a person encountering a ‘knot’ or an obstacle to their quest to achieve something and ends with them overcoming that obstacle.

As the discerning reader will no doubt have noticed, ‘Watson’s knot’ reduces historical events to an invariant pattern which repeats itself time and time again in the course of Canadian history—hero meets monster, hero slays monster, freedom, harmony and prosperity reign. By emplotting events in this repetitive and formulaic manner, they come to take on a mythical character. True to its paedocratic assumptions about the ‘illiteracy’ (cultural and otherwise) of the audience of the Minutes, such a repetitive approach to storytelling seeks to draw heavily upon what writers like Jack Goody and Walter Ong describe as “oral logic”. In primarily ‘oral’ societies and subcultures, they argue, the lack of any mechanical means of memory storage means that valuable information has to be encoded in formulaic patterns and frequently repeated in order to have any hope of being preserved. As Ong writes, in oral societies, fixed, formulaic and

repetitive patterns “form the substance of thought itself. Thought in any extended form is impossible without them, for it consists in them” (Ong, 1999: 63). The cultural form in which the Minutes are encoded further amplifies the ‘oral’ character of the Minutes: the commercial. Commercials are cultural forms which seek to alter the beliefs or behaviour of a given target population through the constant repetition of the same formulaic message.

By presenting and constantly re-presenting events drawn from Canadian history in this formulaic and repetitive manner, the Minutes appear to be designed to capitalize upon what Fiske and Hartley describe as “the bardic function of television”. As they explain in Reading Television (1978), television plays a similar social role as bards did in what they call “ethnographic societies”. More specifically, they argue that like the bard, television constantly re-enacts formulaic stories. Such stories act to reinforce and celebrate a given community’s sense of its collective identity, that allow it to comfortably fit ‘the new’ into the ‘already known’ and to suggest the need for change when ‘the new’ cannot be accommodated. Furthermore, Fiske and Hartley make three additional points that are useful for our purposes. First of all, they make it clear that television storytelling tends to be based on an oral rather than a literate logic. As they explain:

television’s meanings are arrived at through the devices of spoken discourse fused with verbal images, rather than through the structures of formal logic. This means that apparent inconsistencies or lapses in logic are not necessarily faults in television discourse. They must be seen as aspects of a different kind of logic: as part of a process whose aim is to produce fully satisfactory and plausible meaning; a process which offers us myths with which we are already familiar, and seeks to convince us that these myths are appropriate to their context. (Fiske & Hartley, 1978: 112)

The above reference to “familiar myths” indexes the last two important points that we can draw from Fiske and Hartley. They argue that television narration is inherently

mythic in character in that it rests upon a set of unquestioned cultural assumptions about the nature of social reality and cultural identities. Because it draws upon unquestioned cultural assumptions, television tends to have a conservative and exclusionary character in that it tends to 'naturalize' the mainstream view of the world and to ignore competing views. As Ong argues, this conservatism and inability to accept "difference" is central to oral societies because "A sound-dominated verbal economy is consonant with aggregative (harmonizing) tendencies rather than with analytic, dissecting tendencies... It is consonant also with conservative holism (the homeostatic present that must be kept intact, the formulary expressions that must be kept intact)" (Ong, 1999: 65). If Ong, Fiske et al, are correct (and I suspect that they are), the choice of the commercial form for the inculcation of a nostalgic, centralist and unitary vision of the Canadian past seems to be, to say the least, prescient.

The Minutes and the Nostalgia for Grand Narrative

"Watson's knot", however, does more than simply provide infantilized audiences with a repetitive, formulaic and mythicized version of the Canadian past, it also connects the Heritage Minutes up with what I will call "the Canadian grand narrative". In an insightful paper titled "'A Growing *Necessity* for Canada': W.L. Morton's Centenary Series and the Forms of National History, 1955-80", Lyle Dick suggests that the nostalgia for memory that recurrently makes its way into Canadian public culture tends to be accompanied by another form of nostalgia: the nostalgia for grand narrative. The term 'grand narrative' or 'metanarrative' gained prominence in the academic community with the publication of J.F. Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition in 1980. In that book,

Lyotard argues that grand narratives such as that of the movement towards 'emancipation', 'progress' or 'understanding' act as overarching frameworks for the ordering of historical events. Such grand narratives, he argues, have traditionally been called upon to legitimate many of the processes which have been central to the modern project: the rise of the sciences, the use of technology to predict and control non-human and human nature, the expansion of the state apparatus, the 'marketization' of economic relationships and so on.

As Dick details, the Centenary series was a series of sixteen volumes (the first was published in 1955), planned and edited by the prominent Canadian historian W.L. Morton and written, with one exception, by other prominent mid-century Canadian historians and was intended, from the outset, to provide Canadians with their own 'grand narrative'. This series was inspired by the Massey Commission's assertion that a unified Canadian culture (and thus polity) would be unattainable without the creation of a shared national narrative that would have the power to ward off the disintegrating forces of regionalism, and especially Quebec nationalism, as well as the pull towards continentalism. This inspiration provided the series with a distinctively political mission: to tell Canada's history from the Vikings to the present in a manner that figured it as "a logical, even inevitable, progression to the modern nation-state" (Dick, 2001: 234).

Such a grand narrative of inevitable progress, Dick argues, was intended to act as a "national mythology". Like all mythologies, it achieved its hortatory and binding power by systematically suppressing and/or reconfiguring pasts that did not fit within its neat little picture of the world. For example, Dick discusses how a proposed book on the

history of Canada's west coast was nixed and the pre-Confederation history of all four Atlantic provinces was condensed into one volume on the grounds that they would be "incompatible with his principal leitmotifs of French-English duality and integration of the regions into the nation-state" (Dick, 2001: 235). Not only were the histories of the 'regions' suppressed and condensed, so too were those of Canada's aboriginal and non-Northern European peoples for the very same reasons. As a result of the elision and condensation of these other pasts, the resulting grand narrative or national mythology, Dick argues, is lily-white and centered on Central Canada's efforts to unify the rest of the country under its hegemony. According to Dick, the emplotment of Morton's own contribution to the series, a volume titled The Critical Years (1964) that focuses on the decade and a half surrounding Confederation, was synecdochic of the narrative organization of the series as a whole. Morton intended this book, Dick reports, "as a narrative of the realization of Canadian unity in the past. The book traced the progress of a subject-hero, Central Canada...through successive confrontations with parochial and divisive forces towards the achievement of its goal of unification of the British North American colonies" (Dick, 2001: 242).

Having established the contours of the grand narrative and its exclusions, Dick then goes on to resituate it in its historical context. Such a move is justified, he explains, because "A work of history is itself a historical artifact whose language and forms tell a story about the author's concerns, anxieties and obsessions at the time of the writing" (Dick, 2001: 242). As we have already seen, the series was inspired by the 1951 Massey Commission and began publishing in 1955. By the early 1960s, the two main threats to a

shared national memory identified by that Commission—continentalism and Quebec separatism—had seemed, in the eyes of many English-Canadian nationalists including Morton, to have grown exponentially. In the case of Morton, Dick narrates, this perception of an increased threat led him to continuously reassert the grand narrative and its emphasis on ‘unity’ and ‘coherence’ with a new ferocity and bellicosity. In one paper, for example, he wrote that the Canadian federation was able to ward off American annexation only “by creating one political nationality, and not allowing cultural and ethnic communities to acquire communities” (quoted in Dick, 2001: 244). So fierce and frequent did his increasingly simplistic reiterations of the grand narrative become, Dick argues, that they began to take on the character of “wish-fulfillment of restoring order and wholeness to the nation-state that seemed on the verge of disintegration” (Dick, 2001: 246).

As I argued in the previous chapters, among stakeholders in the contemporary English-Canadian project of nation-building, the anxiety caused in Morton by this fear of disintegration has also led them, like Morton, to alternate between moments of nostalgic reverie and shrill retrenchment. As Ian McKay argues in “After Canada: On Amnesia and Apocalypse in the Contemporary Crisis” (1998), in the face of mounting evidence of “the collapse of the entire post-war myth-symbol complex” upon which the traditional Canadian grand narrative is based, “Many rewards, monetary and symbolic, book contracts and television appearances, await those whose voices are the loudest and tell the best-loved and most familiar tales. So many authorities, fixed and sure in their command of an unchanging Canadian essence and of the Canadian landscape which is its stage, our truth and our destiny, now parade before us” (McKay, 1998: 79). This parade of

authorities across the Canadian landscape has occurred, McKay argues, as a result of Canada's increasingly "fierce need to mythologize our history" in order to maintain social cohesion.

In such a context of the nostalgic need to reintroduce 'order' and 'necessity' into our experience of the present and to secure the future by rewriting the past, he argues, the historian's preoccupation with 'facts' and questions of evidence gives way to "the nationalists' grand myths". On the part of both English-Canadian and Quebecois nationalists, he argues, history takes the form of a "comic book world" in which "one finds continuous national histories, myth-symbol complexes with heroes, villains, turning-points and scared landscapes, and finally the assurance (unless the nation's Other is successful) of a happy ending. On both sides, historical continuity is secured by 'reading back' in time the boundaries and certainties of the past; in the *Historical Atlas of Canada*, even the first nomads from Siberia somehow figure into the Canadian narrative" (McKay, 1998: 81). The net result of these nostalgic and mythic rewritings of the past, McKay concludes, is an 'infantilization' of the reading public and the simplification of its understanding of the past because they are little more than "simplistic attempts at political mobilization rather than...useful guides to the complexities of the past" (McKay, 1998: 88).

In spite of McKay's scepticism towards them, such "simplistic attempts at political mobilization" continue to be voiced from all ends of the English Canadian political spectrum. In a speech titled "Reflections on Canada and on Canadian Identity and Unity", for example, Thomas D'Aquino, the president and chief executive of the Business Council on National Issues, shared with his audience his understanding of Canadian history.

Canada's creation, he argued, represented "the triumph of the will over what many would have said was unattainable. I learned [in school] of the clash between the two great founding European peoples, the English and French, of the struggle for responsible government, of the great leap of faith that was Confederation, of the bridging of the continent with ribbons of steel, of the National Policy, of the two great wars where Canada's contribution was greatly disproportionate to our size, and of Canada's emergence as a strong, confident, prosperous and idealistic country" (D'Aquino, 1999: 2). Similarly, in her installation speech as Governor General, Adrienne Clarkson asserted that "Stumbling through darkness and racing through light, we have persisted in the creation of a Canadian civilization... We have the opportunity to leave behind the useless blood calls of generations, now that we are in a land that stretches to infinity. Wilfrid Laurier understood this clearly: "We have made a conquest greater and more glorious than that of any territory", he said, "we have conquered our liberties."'" (Clarkson, 1999:2).

What makes these quotations from D'Aquino and Clarkson interesting for our purposes is that it suggests the endurance of a very specific narrative of Canadian history in the minds of at least some members of the central Canadian elite. That narrative is known as the "colony to nation" narrative. It drew its name from an important textbook history of Canada written by Arthur Lower in the 1950s and it was the foundation of what McKay would call the dominant "myth-symbol complex" in post-war English-Canada to which the lamentations over the death of Canadian memory nostalgically hearken. It is most closely associated with historians like Arthur Lower, Donald Creighton, Frank Underhill and other members of the "Toronto School" of Canadian History. Briefly stated,

this narrative emplots Canada's history as a heroic epic in which Canada, the subject-hero, continuously overcomes a harsh climate and forbidding landscape, the cultural and political tensions created by the co-presence of significant French and English populations (as Timothy Stanley points out, this narrative proceeds "almost without reference to the [aboriginal] peoples whose lands were occupied" (Stanley, 1998: 42)) and the whims of French, English and American imperial policy in order to create a prosperous, peaceful, tolerant and just society. As the following passage from Arthur Lower's suitably titled book Colony to Nation reveals, this grand narrative takes on a providential and almost religious tone for its adherents:

From the land, Canada, must come the soul of Canada. That it may so come is not as fanciful as some might think. When in 1763 the experiment was begun in the northern wildernesses, no one foresaw the strong state that was to be. Canada has been built in defiance of geography. Its two coasts were bridged by a transcontinental railway almost in defiance of common sense. Canadian statesmen reconciled the irreconcilable when in the 1840's they joined dependence to independence. They accomplished one of the great acts of state-building in history when in 1867 they brought together scattered provinces and two peoples into one country. Though the extremists would have more than once wrecked it, the structure so built has never failed in crisis to rally to it the support of moderate men from both races. It has stood the storms of two world wars. In every generation Canadians have had to rework the miracle of their political existence. Canada has been created because there has existed within the hearts of the people a determination to build for themselves an enduring home. Canada is a supreme act of faith. (Lower, 1964: 468)

This quotation from Lower is very interesting because it situates the colony to nation narrative within two larger grand narratives which have always been central to the modern project: the narrative of overcoming/emancipation and the narrative of reconciliation/unification. As Peter Wagner argues in A Sociology of Modernity (1994), the grand narrative of overcoming/emancipation has often been called upon to provide

legitimacy and coherence for modern projects. This narrative, he writes, “stood at the very origin of modern times. It goes back to the quest for autonomy for scientific pursuits during the so-called scientific revolution, to the demand for self-determination in the political revolutions...and the liberation of economic activities from the supervision and regulation of the absolutist state...this discourse of liberation was and is of major importance as a means of self-interpretation of and for ‘modern’ societies” (Wagner, 1994: 5). Not only did it provide modernity with a coherent self-image but, as David Gress writes, this narrative “provided a cultural and historical basis for a liberal consensus about the merits and potential of the West that was unapologetically rationalist, progressive, and confident of the benefits of science and industry. It was meant to foster excellence in education, common ground in politics, and harmonious assimilation in society.” (Gress, 1997: 3)

In the European context, the grand narrative of overcoming was generally directed at social, political and cultural impediments to the liberation of the subject ranging from the church to the traditional privileges of the aristocracy. More recently, it has been used in support of the women’s, civil and gay rights movements as well as various decolonizing and anti-imperialist movements. While this ‘cultural’ and ‘political’ emphasis certainly crossed the Atlantic—the American Revolution, for example, is a defining event in the history of liberal modernity—the conditions of settling in a vast and ‘wild’ (by European standards) new space turned the land itself into an obstacle to be overcome for the emerging North American societies. As the Lower passage suggests, the national grand narratives of both Canada and the United States have emphasized the heroic and cunning

actions of citizens of both countries in their respective projects of subduing the land. In Canada, this gave rise to what Maurice Charland calls English-Canada's "technological nationalism". According to Charland, this is the dominant nationalist discourse in English Canada and it promises 'a liberal state in which technology would be a neutral medium for the development of a polis' (Charland, 1986: 198). As Lower put it: "Canada has been built in defiance of geography" through technological means.

In the organization of experience according to the grand narrative of overcoming, impediments to the free movement of the subject are given a basic choice: follow along or be swept away by time's forward arrow. In the settlement of the American west, for example, this meant the virtual elimination of a considerable native presence in the name of 'modernity and freedom'. When the English formally took over Quebec in 1763, strong pressures were placed upon the governors of Quebec by the English government and local English settlers to rid the French-Canadian population of their 'regressive' religious beliefs, customs, laws, political institutions and so on and to 'anglicize' them. Instead, however, governors like Murray and Carleton refused such orders and worked with the French-Canadian elite to create a social and political order that recognized and protected many 'traditional' French-Canadian institutions.

Such events would seem to preclude a consistent deployment of the purely liberal narrative of overcoming. As political scientist Guy LaForest argues, central to the liberal narrative of overcoming is the belief that "Liberal progress goes hand in hand with the withering away of nationalism and particular commitments. The rewards of modernization will be so appealing that individuals will not hesitate to abandon their particular cultures

and ways of life” (Laforest, 1992: 506). From the lens of the narrative of overcoming, the continuous failure to assimilate French Canada would seem to suggest an ongoing failure of the English-Canadian project as a whole. In order to save their heroic self-image, English-Canadians began to deploy a second grand narrative alongside that of overcoming: the Hegelian grand narrative of reconciliation.

In western modernity, the movement of history towards reconciliation has been closely allied with the progressive movement towards freedom and reason. In Hegel’s Philosophy of History (orig. pub. date 1833), for example, he argues that “the final cause of the World at large, we allege to be the consciousness of its own freedom on the part of Spirit, and ipso facto, the reality of that freedom...the essential nature of freedom...is to be displayed in coming to consciousness of itself (for it is in its very nature, self-consciousness) and thereby realizing its existence” (Hegel, 1956: 19). For Hegel, as for many of those whom he influenced, history’s ineluctable march towards freedom and reason (self-consciousness) required the concerted wills of human agents towards two main goals. The first goal was the increased mastery of physical nature. As we saw in Lower, modernity has always equated freedom with the increased ability to understand, subjugate and harness physical nature in order to satisfy human needs and desires. The second is the willingness to overcome local parochialism and gather together in what he identifies as the culmination of the world-historical process: the state.

Hegel, it will be recalled, viewed the movement of history as dialectical. In any period in humanity’s development, every thesis comes into conflict with its antithesis. According to Hegel, both thesis and antithesis are inherently partial descriptions of a more

universal reality. When they come into conflict, he argues, they are both at once negated and preserved. As Charles Taylor explains in Hegel and Modern Society (1979), Hegel calls this movement of negation and preservation ‘sublation’ (aufhebung) and it refers to “the dialectical transition in which a lower stage is both annulled and preserved in a higher one...because the unity does not just abolish the distinction, Hegel often speaks of the resolution as a ‘reconciliation’...the two terms remain, but that their opposition is overcome” (Taylor, 1979: 49-50). While the narrative of overcoming figures progress in a spatialized manner as an unimpeded ‘onward and upward’ movement away from the past, the narrative of reconciliation thus figures progress along evolutionary or organic lines—a teleological movement in which the ‘best’ aspects of the past are preserved but combined with other salutary traditions to form a new and improved present with this process culminating in the formation of the nation-state.

In the English Canadian grand narrative, we see this figuration of intercultural communication as a process of reconciliation occur time and again in the representation of French-English relations, English Canada’s relationship to ‘the Empire’ and multiculturalism. As Ian McKay satirically notes, the ‘loyal Canadian’ must never doubt that “Canada, founded sometime in the early to mid-19th century through a compact between the two principal European peoples, has from time immemorial been a liberal-democratic nation-state characterized by social inclusiveness and the pursuit of the ‘middle way’. Do not fail to celebrate...the humane and generous values upon which we all agree (and which from time immemorial have distinguished us from the Americans), our almost infinite flexibility, tolerance and love of the honourable compromise.” (McKay, 1998: 80)

In other words, what would seem to be a failure in the 'overcoming' version of the grand narrative becomes a sign of moral maturity and superiority in the reconciliation narrative.

Unlike the Americans, who consistently display their 'immaturity' in their seeming unwillingness to tolerate cultural difference, Canadians are more morally advanced.

Canadian history is held up as an exemplum for the rest of an increasingly multicultural world. In John Ralston Saul's Reflections of a Siamese Twin (1997), for example, he argues that the major themes of Canadian history have been those of compromise and reconciliation and that sharing this historical proclivity for reconciliation with the rest of the world represents Canada's special world-historical mission (Saul, 1997).

As McKay's reference to the use of the grand narrative of reconciliation to distinguish Canada from the Americans suggests, in spite of what would seem to be a universalistic tendency in both grand narratives, both have traditionally been deployed to reinforce cultural boundaries. As P.A. Buckner argues, prior to the 1960s, the approach of 'virtually every English-Canadian historian' "was to minimize the significance of internal divisions within Canadian society by focusing on the things which united Canadians and distinguished them from other peoples; they undertook to emphasize the challenges which Canadians had overcome in the past and, in the words of Frank Underhill, their ability 'to do great things together in the future'. The faith of English-Canadian historians in the distinctiveness of Canada and the viability of the Canadian nation state was unquestioned and unquestioning." (Buckner, 2000: 4-5) This sense of distinctiveness and superiority was secured by figuring Canada's particular historical trajectory along the lines of a 'Canadian exceptionalism' which held that as a result of both its technological dynamism

in overcoming a harsh and foreboding landscape to create a prosperous society and its mastery of the arts of reconciliation and compromise, Canada represents the vanguard of the modernization process and an example for the rest of humanity.

By positing itself as representing modernity at its most advanced, the English-Canadian grand narrative uses the idea of progress to produce 'Others'. As Steven Best argues in The Politics of Historical Vision (1995), two main assumptions go into the notion of progress. First is the idea of the unity of the historical process—different nations and cultures are subject to the inexorable movement of time. Secondly, this movement is teleological with each human moving from a state of potentiality to one of actuality. In the case of cultures, it is a movement from 'savagery' to 'civilization' culminating in the "realization of universal norms such as freedom, equality and reason. This process is motivated and defined by cumulative advances in science, economics, morality, and politics, which occur through the gradual rationalization of social and personal existence" (Best, 1995: 4). As Uday Mehta argues in Liberalism and Empire (1999), western colonizers have traditionally used the progressivist arrangement of cultures according to stages of civilization to label colonized cultures as well as their own national underclasses as 'backwards'. The anthropologist Johannes Fabian calls this differential arrangement of cultures "the denial of coevalness" because it held that so-called 'backward' peoples were just 'stagnant' or 'retarded' bourgeois Europeans and rejected the possibility that they were simply very different cultures facing each other at the same time. This inability to recognize different ways of living has traditionally been used by western powers to justify

to themselves what Enrique Dussel calls the “necessary pedagogic violence that produces civilization and modernization.” (Dussel, 1995: 66).

Historically, this colonialist understanding of progress was used in Canada to justify actions against the colonized native peoples such as the creation of the reservation system and the residential schools and it continued to make its presence felt in the Canadian grand narrative up until the 1970s. In a textbook titled The Canadians published in 1968, for example, Donald Creighton described how the Métis “saw in Confederation and the coming of mass immigration the inevitable extinction of their own free, wild way of life. With Louis Riel as their political theorist and revolutionary leader, they prepared to resist; and they were aided by the French-speaking priests, who, through a combination of religious bigotry and devotion to the their half-savage charges, were prepared to use any means to delay the advent of English-speaking Protestants from Ontario” (Creighton, 1968: 35-6). In this passage, coevalness is denied in a myriad of ways. The Métis are described in temporally-loaded terms as “free”, “wild” and “half-savage” and foolishly and ultimately disastrously opposed to the coming of the vanguard of ‘civilization’ and ‘progress’—English-speaking Protestants from Ontario and their railway. Similarly, the Catholic clergy is portrayed as ‘regressive’ in their opposition to ‘progress’—they are religious as opposed to scientific, bigoted as opposed to enlightened, animated by emotion as opposed to reason. In this manner, the objections of both groups to the destruction of an established way of life in the name of progress is made to appear to be not just inevitable but desirable.

In that same text book, we get another interesting example of the same strategy of producing 'backwards' Others. W.S. MacNutt, best-known for his histories of the Maritimes, deployed the 'denial of coevalness' strategy in an attempt to save the grand narrative of reconciliation. There, he begins by describing Honoré Mercier's *Le Parti National*—a Quebec nationalist party formed in reaction to the hanging of Louis Riel—as an affront to “the memories of Lafontaine, Cartier, and all of the other French-Canadian leaders who believed that the two races could work together within a single constitutional system” (MacNutt, 1968: 99). In other words, Mercier's party represented a potent threat to what Walter Fisher calls the 'fidelity' of the reconciliation narrative—whether the story rings true with other stories that we consider to be to be true. In order to counter that threat, MacNutt does all he can to construct the *Parti National* as possessing a 'regressive', 'parochial', 'atavistic' and 'irrational' character. We are told that “Its philosophic basis was a mystic faith in the virtues of the French race, of memories of how Charlemagne had championed the papacy in the Middle Ages, of the great tradition of St. Louis and Joan of Arc and of Champlain and Brébeuf. Mercier had been something of a Rouge, tinged with anti-clericalism, but it was easy for him to identify his violent racism with a militant Catholicism” (Macnutt, 1968: 99-100). Again, we see how the vocabularies of modernity, progress and reconciliation are marshaled to dismiss a threatening rupture in an otherwise heroic narrative. Unlike his 'moderate', 'ecumenical', 'rational' and 'pragmatic' predecessors Lafontaine and Cartier, Mercier regresses into mysticism, myth, racism and faith. This is yet another example of how the differential positioning of individuals and groups within the unified movement of historical time towards progress is

central to contemporary struggles for hegemony. As Gianni Vattimo observes: “it is still an insult to call someone a ‘reactionary’, that is, attached to values from the past, to tradition, to forms of thought that have been ‘overcome’ ... If history is progressive ... greater value will be attached to that which is more ‘advanced’ (Vattimo, 1992: 1-2).

Along with representing competing groups as being ‘regressive’ or ‘backwards’, another important hegemonic strategy is to simply leave them out of the movement of time. As Walter Benjamin points out in his “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, the victors in the class struggle get to write the history and they do so by celebrating the heroic exploits of their own group. In so doing, they also tend to treat the counterclaims or experiences of the losing groups (especially after the struggle has been decisively won) as being unworthy of commemoration. In ‘classical’ English-Canadian historiography, for example, we can see this in the representation of native peoples. Once they had ceased to be either military threats or trading partners in the 19th century, they simply are written out of the story. Apart from his concern with the Riel Rebellions, Donald Creighton’s *Canada’s First Century*, for example, devotes all of one sentence to dealing with post-Confederation native history.

Having outlined the broad contours of the twin Canadian grand narratives and how they can be used to both produce and protect against “Others”, I’d like to draw attention to more formal issues of the choice of narrative frameworks. Following writers like Hayden White and Northrop Frye, I argue that the ‘colony to nation’ narrative figures Canada’s history as a story of progressive ‘overcoming’ and ‘reconciliation’ as a result of its extensive reliance on the traditional plot lines of romance and comedy. As White argues

in Metahistory, the romance is “fundamentally a drama of self-identification symbolized by the hero’s transcendence of the world of experience, his victory over it, and his final liberation from it...It is a drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness, and of the ultimate transcendence of man over the world in which he was imprisoned by the Fall” (White, 1973: 20-1). In the above-cited passage from Lower, this romantic movement from a fallen to an ‘Edenic’ reality structures the whole narrative. The opacity and danger of a seemingly untamable wilderness is overcome and transformed into ‘an enduring home’ by the cunning and will of the collective hero.

Furthermore, in “Grand Narrative in American Historical Writing: From Romance to Uncertainty”, Dorothy Ross argues that the plot line of comedy strongly resembles that of romance in that it also moves from a ‘fallen’ starting point of division, conflict and confusion to one of an Edenic ‘reconciliation’. However, unlike romance that focuses on the individual’s quest for identity and self-realization, comedy is typically a social drama “that moves from one kind of society to another promising greater social integration and freedom” (Ross, 1995: 653). Furthermore, it should be understood as a qualification of the romantic view of the world because it takes “seriously the forces which oppose the effort at human redemption naively held up as a possibility for mankind in Romance” (White, 1973: 10). To go back to Lower, while it is clear that the comic themes of ‘reconciliation’, ‘social integration’ and ‘freedom’ resonate throughout the cited passage, his indexing of the ubiquity of destructive ‘extremists’ in Canadian public culture and his suggestion that Canada has to be continuously recreated by ‘acts of faith’ suggest the existence of an awareness that Canada is always in danger of returning to its fallen state.

The existence of this consciousness that Canada, as a collective hero, is always in danger of a new 'fall' explains the tendency of many of the adherents to the 'colony to nation' narrative to wax nostalgic about our current social reality. The nostalgic construction of the past follows the plot line of romance and comedy in its first two moments. Like them, it begins by positing a fallen state. It then proceeds to recall how the group or the individual overcame this fallen state in order to will a Golden Age into existence. However, unlike romance that stops there, nostalgia goes on to posit a relapse in which the forces of darkness and entropy have regained the upper hand. In order to regain our state of grace, nostalgia tells us, we must, like medieval pilgrims following the Stations of the Cross, reenact the original romance.

In using the narrative codes of romance and comedy to construct the flow of time as a heroic process of overcoming obstacles on the path to self-realization and social reconciliation, I argue, the 'colony to nation' narrative can be seen as a hegemonic construction. In its classical Gramscian formulation, hegemony refers to the attempt by one group to exercise intellectual and moral leadership over allied and competing groups by winning their consent. In order to do so, Gramsci explains, the would-be hegemons must engage in the "gradual but continuous absorption...of the active elements produced by allied groups-and even of those which came from antagonistic groups and [seem] irreconcilably hostile" (Gramsci, 1971: 58-9).

Going back to our discussion of romance and its more 'realistic' and 'social' form, comedy, we can see that a hegemonic impulse is written right into historical narratives plotted along these lines. As we have seen, the dramatic movement of both of these

narratives is from a position of division to one of unification. In the romance, the hero is separated from himself/home/community/God and uses his will, virtue and cunning to reunite what was previously divided. This hegemonic and integrative tendency is even more pronounced in comedy which starts from a position of communal conflict and works towards the resolution, reconciliation and, ultimately, synthesis of previously antagonistic social values, groups and actors. Furthermore, because it takes potential sources of opposition much more seriously than romance, it figures reconciliation as an ongoing and potentially faltering process. In so doing, it always carries within it a moral and political prescription to 'keep up the fight' for unity and to 'never let your guard down' because centrifugal elements are always lurking on the fringes waiting to disrupt the harmonious and just society which has been willed into existence.

I will argue in the next two chapters that the grand narrative's dual employment of Canadian history along the lines of comedy and romance serves as a 'pragmatic charter' that both legitimizes and celebrates the present social order. Furthermore, it seeks to provide its readers/viewers with subject positions that will help to maintain the status quo in the future. When we look in the next two chapters at how this dual employment occurs in the Heritage Minutes, we will see that a very interesting thing occurs. While the narrative of reconciliation tends to overwhelmingly predominate in the Minutes set before the early 20th century, it almost completely disappears after that period and the Heritage Project's version of the 20th century becomes a simple celebration of Canadian technological, intellectual and artistic invention. In order to try to determine why this shift from the realm of politics to techniques takes place, I will first begin by examining how the

narrative of reconciliation is figured in the earlier Minutes and, following Macherey and Freud, I will try to read their gaps in order to reveal the history that they seek to repress. In the following chapter, I will do the same for the narratives of overcoming but I will also try to determine another thing: why the narrative of reconciliation also ends up being repressed.

Chapter 6: The Narrative of Reconciliation

The average Canadian television viewer's experience of the Heritage Minutes is probably very much the same as her experience of other commercials. In the breaks in between segments of whatever show she is watching, they appear seemingly at random and without any necessary reference to the commercials and/or shows which precede and succeed them. However, in the Heritage Project's VHS compilation of the first 60 Heritage Minutes entitled The Heritage Project 60th Minute Commemorative Video (1998), they are packaged together in chronological succession and accompanied by a guidebook which organizes them according to various themes (women, Canada and the world, inventors and so on). When viewed in this chronological manner, the researcher quickly begins to notice a distinct pattern in the relationship between the narratives of reconciliation and overcoming. In the Minutes set before 1900, the narrative of reconciliation with its emphasis on situations of intercultural conflict and political compromise plays a preponderant role. However, in the 35 Minutes set after 1900, only 7 deal with issues of cultural politics. Furthermore, with the exception of 5 Minutes devoted to the women's suffrage movement (I will speculate on the reasons for this later), any reference to formal institutions disappears after the mid-19th century. In their depoliticized version of the 20th century, the Minutes figure Canadian history primarily as a parade of inventors, sports figures and commercial artists who overcome various barriers to change the world for the better.

It is not hard to see why such a depoliticization takes place. It would seem that the producers of the Minutes worked with a sense that the closer the commemorated events

impinged upon the 'living memory' of viewers, the greater was their potential for triggering countervailing memories. As a result, they more than likely made the decision to limit their representation of 20th century Canadian history to relatively non-controversial subjects. Few today, for example, will dispute the right of women to vote or the virtuousness of inventing a water pump that will provide the African poor with clean drinking water. However, as Nicole Neatby suggested, more sensitive issues such as French-English relations are best left in the misty and mythic past where it is less likely that their viewers will have the intellectual resources to question their version of events. In other words, in spite of their lamentations about the memory-crisis, the producers of the Heritage Minutes are not above taking advantage of the Canadian public's dearth of historical knowledge for the sake of creating a 'usable past'. As the project's historical consultant John Thompson reported in "Minute by Minute", when he and another historian objected to an overdramatized representation of a 1690 parley between an English emissary and the Governor General Frontenac in Quebec on the basis that it contravened existing 'well-documented' accounts, their objections were dismissed with the reasoning that "It's 1690. It's 300 years ago. Who's going to remember that?" (Heritage Project, 1998).

Best Left in the Past: the Noble Savage and the Longing for Myth

In the chronologically first Minute titled "Peacemaker", one can see how this strategy of using the distant and hazy past in order to broach politically sensitive issues works. As will be recalled, I argued earlier that nostalgic visions of the past are as concerned with the present and the future as with the past. The nostalgic past is often

more a critique of the present and an expression of a desired future than the product of remembrance. This combination of critique and desire means that nostalgic pasts often have the status of what Mikhail Bakhtin called the “hidden polemic” directed at competing versions of the past, present and future. In the hidden polemic, Bakhtin writes, “the author’s discourse is directed towards its own referential object...but at the same time every statement about the object is constructed in such a way that...a polemical blow is struck at the other’s discourse on the same theme.” (Bakhtin, 1994: 107).

One can see this textual strategy at work in “Peacemaker”. It begins with a close shot of young native girl and her father (dressed in contemporary garb) planting a pine sapling. The dialogue runs as follows:

Father: This tree represents our people.

Girl: What kind of tree is it, dada?

Father: A tree of great peace. The Peacemaker gave the Great Laws of Peace to the Iroquois.

(Switch to a scene portraying ‘traditionally’ dressed native peoples brandishing war clubs and standing in front of a smoking hole in the ground).

Father: In the dark times many years ago, Hiawatha spoke for the Peacemaker.

Hiawatha (spoken in Iroquoian and sub-titled in English): You chiefs have brought ruin and despair to your children through war. You must fling this burning demon into the underground river to be carried away forever, Peace now...Peace.

(The assembled chiefs then fling their clubs into the river. A computer-generated demon then appears and is sucked into hole. The Great Tree of Peace rises and covers it).

Father: And the power of the Great Peace drove the evil from them.

(The scene switches back to the present).

Girl: Does the Great Peace still have power?

Father: You're here now, aren't you? (Heritage Project, 1998)

On the face of it this would seem like just another garden variety plea for peace and understanding adorned with the stereotypical 'Noble Savage' imagery which is so common in white representations of native North American culture (Sayre, 1997).

However, in the shadow of the Oka crisis in 1990 and subsequent disputes over land claims, fishing rights and self-government, it takes on a very different meaning.

'Peacemaker' is a hidden polemic directed, in general, against militant native separatists across Canada and, in particular, against the Mohawk Warriors who faced down the Canadian Army in the Oka standoff. This is evident, for example, in the fact that the Peacemaker story is identified as a traditional Iroquois tale. While most white Canadians might not be aware of this, the average Mohawk would almost certainly know that the Iroquois are a centuries-old confederacy of native nations residing in western New York, Ontario and Quebec and that the Mohawk Nation is a charter member of this confederacy. While most non-native Canadians, therefore, might interpret this text as a generalizable plea for peace, the hidden message to the Mohawk is a little more threatening. In essence, it is an attempt to tell them that "You're still here, aren't you?" mainly as a result of their willingness to abjure armed resistance and work within the Canadian federation. This is reinforced by the rather chilling message that doing otherwise will bring "ruin and despair to your children".

In "Peacemaker", every attempt is made to disguise the hegemonic and polemical intent of this Minute by making it appear as though its message does not come from the

pens of the central Canadian elite but represents the traditional wisdom of the native peoples. Several strategies are deployed in order to do so. The most obvious one is the use of a native actor as the contemporary storyteller who is teaching his daughter about her heritage. The second and equally obvious one is the use of the traditional Iroquois Hiawatha legend. Hiawatha is the semi-mythical hero who is credited with bringing together the five warring Iroquoian-speaking tribes of the Mohawk, Oneida, Cayuga, Onondaga and Seneca into the Five Nations Confederacy (Johansen, 1995). It is worth noting, however, that this was not a message of universal peace and brotherhood (as this Minute seems to suggest) but one of peace between the Iroquois. As the Huron and other native peoples in the Great Lakes region would find out in the next two centuries, this peace allowed the Iroquois to develop into the area's military superpower. So powerful were they that for much of the 17th century, even the French admitted that the Iroquois could wipe out their colony of New France should they so desire (Eccles, 1974). In other words, "Peacemaker" seems to elide an important aspect of this story—the peace championed by Hiawatha was the precursor to three centuries of Iroquois military aggression and economic domination of the region. It can be thus read as a testament to the *realpolitik* fact that it is much easier for a nation to compete with others if it secures social solidarity and/or national unity. Seen in this light, the legend of Hiawatha becomes a paean to nationalism.

While the use of a native narrator and the selective narration of the Hiawatha legend mark the two most obvious ways in which this Minute seeks to make it appear as though it is simply channeling traditional native wisdom, several more subtle strategies

also come into play. First of all, there is the lack of captions. At some point in their text, almost all of the Minutes provide their viewers with captions indicating the place and time of the actions. In this Minute, there are no such captions provided. While the differences in clothing and language choice allow the viewer to situate the father and daughter in the present and Hiawatha in the past, that past remains indeterminate. This sense of the indeterminacy of the past is enhanced by the differences in the camerawork between the present-day scenes and those which reenact the meeting between Hiawatha and the chiefs. The scenes of father and daughter are 'torso to head' shots in which the pair remain stable at the centre of the screen but the camera moves steadily from right to left. The camerawork gives the viewer a sense both of physical proximity and the movement of time. In the Hiawatha scenes, on the other hand, the camera remains stable and the move from long shots to 'head to torso' shots does not occur through the use of zooming techniques but by the superimposition of successive images. This gives the entire scene a ghostly, mythic and dreamlike quality that is enhanced by the lighting. Hiawatha and the chiefs constantly move in and out of the shadows created by the main sources of light—the hole in the centre of the shot out of which issues a mysterious blue light and smoke and the shimmering grandeur of the northern lights. Were this not all enough, the appearance of the computer-generated demon (the only instance of the use of animation in all of the Minutes) further assures its mythic and dreamlike character.

In so doing, "Peacemaker" works to imply that, in spite of the fact that they live in 21st century Canada, Canadian native peoples still live in a mythicized or fully enchanted world in which the spirits of the ancestors still walk among them. In other words, while

white Canadians are fully exposed to the 'terror of history', Canadian native people remain in the comforting shell of 'the spirit world'. There are several disturbing things about such a representation. While it is true that, in recent decades, native peoples have increasingly sought to return to their traditional spiritual practices, such a movement only occurred in the aftermath of almost four centuries of attempted forced conversions to Christianity by colonial religious and state authorities. In representing the relationship between traditional wisdom and current circumstances in an unbroken fashion, this Minute 'forgets' the violent colonization of the native lifeworld. Similarly, by representing the Hiawatha story as an event that occurred in the hazy, indeterminate past, "Peacemaker" obscures the relationship between the story and the historical process of Iroquois 'nation-formation'. In Barthes' terms, it thus naturalizes and universalizes a message of peace while stripping it of its historical roots in a very specific place, time and circumstance.

As Johannes Fabian points out in Time and the Other (1983), such a denial of the historicity of the experience of 'Others' and the emphasis on the 'mythic' nature of their culture has been a central strategy of white West construction of the "Other". In anthropological discourse, Fabian argues, the use of time "almost invariably is made for the purpose of distancing those who are observed from the Time of the observer." (Fabian, 1983: 25). Chronological categories such as 'neolithic', 'primitive', 'mythic', 'tribal', for example, serve to create a temporal distance between anthropologists and the subjects of their observation. Fabian calls this distancing process the 'denial of coevalness'. As he explains, this denial involves "*a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of*

anthropological discourse.” (Fabian, 1983: 31, his italics) Tracing this process of temporal distancing, he argues, is not just epistemologically interesting but politically vital: in the history of colonialism, this denial has served as the ideological basis for various colonial ‘civilizing’ and ‘modernizing’ projects and claims of western epistemic and moral superiority at the same time that it has been used to protect the West from the critical voices of its Others.

As Edward Said and many others have pointed out, by insulating itself from the critical voices of its Others, the West can thus project onto them its own desires and fears. In Les Sauvages Américains (1997), Gordon Sayre argues that one of the main ways in which this occurs is by representing the ‘primitive Others’ as an inversion of Western values, beliefs and social structures. Such an inversion, he argues, is not always purely denunciatory. In the figure of the ‘Noble Savage’, for instance, the native “other” is constructed as possessing many of the salutary qualities, virtues and traditions that have been suppressed during the modernization process and has traditionally been held up as an exemplary model of ‘authentic’ and ‘un-alienated’ existence (Sayre, 1997). In other words, the ‘Noble Savage’ is an inherently nostalgic construction—an historic inversion of the present and a prescription for the future.

To go back to “Peacemaker”, we can now better understand why it is the ‘first’ of the Heritage Minutes. In its construction of a mythicized and de-historicized contemporary version of ‘the Noble Savage’, it is the most sustained expression of its producers’ nostalgia for myth. As we have seen, the discourse surrounding the production of the Minutes constructs contemporary white Canada as being bereft of history, memory and

myth and, as a result, it risks 'disintegrating' in the future. The father and daughter in "Peacemaker" represent, as it were, the historic inversion of that amnesiac and demythicized present. While white Canada is modern (or even postmodern) and forgets, they are 'traditional' and remember. While white Canada chronically risks falling apart into cacophony, they are harmonious and united by their shared narratives and the exemplary subject positions encoded in those narratives. They represent, as it were, the future/past which the producers of the Heritage Minutes crave.

We can also see this projection of the central Canadian elite's nostalgia for memory on to the Canadian native peoples in a Minute titled "Inukshuk". As the caption tells us, "Inukshuk" is set on Baffin Island in 1931. It begins with a shot of a Mountie lying beside a tent with a very heavily bandaged foot. In the background, we hear the sound of a group of young Inuit who are busily constructing an Inukshuk under the guidance of a male elder. As they converse in Inuktitut, we are made privy to the Mountie's private thoughts by means of a voice over in which he protests that "I'm in trouble and they're building an Inukshuk." His tone then slowly turns to one of wonder: "I've come across them miles from anywhere... Maybe I'll find out what they're for". He then rises to his feet and hobbles over to the group of Inuit. A young woman then speaks and her words are translated into English by a younger male member of the group as follows: "Now the people will know that we were here." (Heritage Project, 1998). As the Mountie and the Inuit depart the scene, the Mountie takes a long and appreciative look back at the completed Inukshuk. As the Minute draws to a close, the young man's words are repeated again but this time with additional reverb to suggest its 'spiritual' character.

As was the case with “Peacemaker”, the Inukshuk is both a nostalgic construction of the aboriginal past and a projection of the desired future that the Heritage Minutes seek to bring into being. As I argued above, in both Minutes, the aboriginal peoples are figured by the Heritage Minutes as ‘communities of memory’. Unlike their white conquerors who pay the price of amnesia for the benefits of their incessant forward movement in space and time, the aboriginal peoples are constructed as peoples for whom the ancestors are still present and for whom the preservation of their links with the collective past takes precedence over present action. This is the significance of the Mountie’s soliloquy at the beginning of the Minute. He is the representative of white Canada in this Minute. As will be recalled, it begins with his thoughts being dominated by the problems of the present (his injured foot). In this presentist state, he cannot comprehend why the Inuit would engage in this apparently ‘unproductive’ activity. As the Minute proceeds, however, his initial confusion is transformed into understanding. With this change, his demeanour changes accordingly. While he begins with a detached derision, he ends with a new appreciation of the relationship between commemoration, collective identity and a ‘sense of belonging’ in a certain place.

While it does reveal a certain amount of information about one Inuit cultural practice, I would argue that, on the whole, “Inukshuk” is much more a nostalgic projection of the desires and self-image of those behind the Heritage Minutes and the Heritage Projects than an engagement with Inuit history and culture. This becomes quite clear when we inquire further about the role of the Inuksuit (the plural form of Inukshuk). The Inuit make Inuksuit for a wide variety of purposes: “to show directions to travellers,

to warn of impending danger, to mark a place of respect or to act as helpers in the hunting of caribou” (Marsh, 2002). In other words, there is a polysemy to inuksuit that this Minute fails to acknowledge. Furthermore, as poststructuralist critics like Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault argue, there is good reason to be suspicious whenever we encounter such an attempt to ‘fix’ the free play of signification or naturalize one possible meaning as *the* meaning of a given sign. Lying behind such attempts to fix meaning/invoke closure, they argue, are all-too-human motives ranging from political projects founded on some sort of claim to an objective, capital ‘T’ truth to a nostalgic desire to transcend an often messy, complex and contradictory reality in a favor of a comprehensible and unitary at-one-ment with ‘Being’.

To go back to “Inukshuk”, we must ask why it is that we only hear about the memorial function of the inuksuit in this “Minute”. I would suggest that the desire to ‘fix’ the meaning of the inuksuit betrays a desire within Anglo-Canadian culture for a more ontological sense of fixity, a sense of ‘autochtony’. As George Grant argues in “In Defence of North America”, English Canadian culture shares with other white settler colonies a pervasive sense of homelessness. Unlike their European counterparts or the aboriginal peoples whose lands they now occupy, the members of white settler colonies never have a sense that they “can be called autochthonous” because the land “could not be ours in the old way because the making of it ours did not go back before the beginning of conscious memory... When we go into the Rockies we may have the sense that gods are there. But if so, they cannot manifest themselves to us as ours. They are the gods of another race, and we cannot know them because of what we are and what we did. There

can be nothing immemorial for us..." (Grant, 1969: 17). In other words, Grant is arguing here that unlike both the Europeans and the native peoples whose prolonged occupation and mythicization of a certain space allowed them to transform it into an ahistorical 'homeland' that secured their personal and collective identities, nihilism, alienation and the full exposure to the terror of history is the spiritual destiny of white settler colonies.

As I have been arguing in this thesis, the nationalism of the Heritage Project, like all cultural nationalisms, believes that a sense of national unity begins with a sense of a common homeland. While it deploys the discourse of the memory-crisis to lament that recent events have alienated Canadians from each other and their homeland, it remains optimistic that a reassertion of a mythicized view of the Canadian past can transform Canada into a 'homeland' and thus secure Canadian collective and personal identities. It thus rejects Grant's pessimistic suggestion that Canadians are doomed to always experience Canada historically and thus never lose the sense of alienation from the land and from each other. As Patrick Watson reveals in his concluding remarks in Minute by Minute, the Heritage Project is predicated upon the belief that when Canadians commemorate their past, the land will slowly become theirs. This explains the repetition of the phrase "Now the people will know that we were here" in "Inukshuk". This phrase is a declaration of the Heritage Project's faith in commemoration as a means of overcoming alienation and of securing collective identities. By constructing what Nora calls 'lieux de mémoire', alien space becomes domesticated by being drawn into an ever-widening circle of collective narratives out of which 'the people' will eventually emerge. In other words, Patrick Watson, Charles Bronfman, Tom Axworthy et al. seem to see themselves as doing

for Canada what the Inuit elder does for the young members of his tribe—they will teach young Canadians a sense of their own collective identity and their rootedness in Canadian space. While the Inuit elder uses the Inukshuk to bind memory, identity and place, the Heritage Project seek to use the Heritage Minutes to construct a sense of autochtony and national identity among Canadians.

Ceremonies of Possession

After “Peacemaker”, the next Minute in which the native peoples play a prominent role is called “Naming Canada”. This Minute begins with a group of white men dressed in Shakespearean era fashions and carrying various flags and standards. As they approach the crest of a hill, highly romantic and dramatic choral music resembling Morricone’s soundtrack to The Mission plays. The scene then cuts to a close-up of the face of a native man and the choir gives way to the trill of a wooden flute. This quick cut from whites to natives and from Mahler-like orchestration to the unaccompanied flute occurs again, culminating in a scene where natives and whites stand face to face in an apprehensive manner. A native elder looks the French over and says in Iroquian (with English subtitles): “Come to the village...we talk.” During this speech, the word “Canada” can be clearly heard and this leads the apparent leader of the whites to ask a priest who is standing beside him: “What’s he saying, Father?”. The priest’s face initially registers surprise at this question but then he regains his composure and replies: “Commander Cartier, he is saying that this nation is called Canada.” The native elder then nods agreement and gestures towards the native village which is now visible in the background and says: “Yes...the village.” A sailor standing behind the man now identified as Cartier then says: “Beg your

pardon, sir, but the word he used, I think that it really means those houses down there”.

The priest’s face then hardens and he retorts: “No, no! Believe me, I know the word, it means “nation” and Canada is its name”. As the two groups then make their way towards the native village to parley, “Naming Canada” ends with the sailor’s voice reiterating that “I’m sure that it means the houses, the village” (Heritage Project, 1998).

This Minute is a classic example of what Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger call “the invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983). The events upon which it is, to be generous, loosely based would have a great deal more difficulty in inspiring patriotism than this version of events. On its website, however, Historica claims that this Minute re-enacts a meeting in 1535 near what is now Quebec city between Cartier and Donnacona, the chief of the Stadaconan Iroquois. The problem is, however, that while these two did meet at that time and at that place, it was not (as the Minute suggests) their first meeting. A year earlier, Cartier had encountered the Stadaconans the summer before in the Bay of Gaspé. On the first day of that encounter, things began peacefully enough. Trade was the order of the day and the French literally acquired the shirts (actually beaver pelts) off the backs of the Stadaconans in exchange for a handful of European trinkets. On the next day, however, things soured. When Cartier erected a 34 foot cross decorated with the *fleur-de-lys* and an inscription that read “Long Live the King of France”, Donnacona objected. Cartier initially tried to win his consent by plying him with alcohol and gifts. When that apparently failed, he used a better but more brutal way of ensuring that Donnacona toed the line: he kidnapped Donnacona’s two sons and brought them back to France as hostages where they were to be francisized and Christianized (Cartier, 1993). In the

following year, 1535, Cartier brought the two young men back to Canada and they led him to their village of Stadacona but, given Cartier's brutal and arrogant behaviour the year before, he was not met with anything remotely resembling the openness and generosity suggested in the Minute. As Cartier's second *Récit* of his voyages attests, the relationship between the two groups during the half-year Cartier's men camped around Stadacona was characterized above all by mutual mistrust verging on overt hostility.

In this Minute, however, none of this is mentioned. In fact, it reconfigures this simmering tension and the existing history of violence into an egalitarian, consensual and downright polite affair. True to the comic vision of the Minutes, conflict in the historical past gives way to reconciliation in the commemorating present. Not only does this reconfiguration serve to obscure the less than heroic actions of Cartier, it also ends up reproducing many of the aspects of the ceremonies of possession by which European powers staked their claim to non-European lands. As Patricia Seed argues in Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World, 1492-1640 (1995), the ceremonial naming of the new land was traditionally one of the first acts by which Europeans claimed possession of a new colony. According to Seed, when performing these ceremonies, it was always very important for the colonizer's sense of the legitimacy of his civilizing mission that the peoples of the freshly claimed lands indicated their consent to their colonization.

The Minute "Naming Canada", I would argue, reproduces this ritual of possession. As its title indicates, the act of naming that draws the native lands into the European 'power/knowledge' complex is at the centre of the action. For our purpose, however, the relationship between Cartier and Donnacona is more interesting. By inviting Cartier into

the 'Canada' seemingly of his own magnanimous volition (which, by the way, he never did), Donnacona is represented as fully consenting to the French colonization of his territory. "Naming Canada", in other words, recreates and celebrates one of the founding colonial rituals and in so doing, it also reproduces the colonial myth that the colonized peoples voluntarily consented to their fate.

It might be argued that "Naming Canada" loses much of its power as an apologia for colonialism as the result of its extensive use of irony. As we have seen, this Minute is built around an in-joke in which the subtitles alert the viewer to the fact that, literally translated, "Canada" means "the village". However, we then see the self-important priest who is intent on maintaining his position as an authorized knower obstinately insist on the veracity of his misinterpretation in spite of the protestations of the ordinary sailor. The viewers are then included in the joke by virtue of their contemporary knowledge that it was the self-important priest's and not the commonsensical 'average Joe's' correct interpretation that ultimately prevailed.

While many critics claim that irony is one of the central textual strategies for the contestation of hegemonic constructions of social reality (cf. Dorland & Charland, 2002), I would argue that this particular use of irony actually reinforces the Minute's hegemonic power through its appeal to an anti-elitist 'commonsensical' populism. As Linda Hutcheon argues, the use of irony has always been central to the creation of a Canadian 'national consciousness'. In a country where the lifeworld is incessantly under colonization by American commercial capitalism and the cultural engineering projects of the Canadian state, the use of irony has developed into a vital means of cultural self-defense for the

average Canadian. As she explains: "Canadians have often turned to irony to position themselves (self-deprecatingly) or to contest the strength of those dominant forces of history or of the current situation" (Hutcheon, 1998b: 21).

In the case of "Naming Canada", the ironic portrayal of the self-important ignorance of the priest and Cartier's equally foolish acceptance of his folly are of a piece with formulaic Hollywood adventure stories. In such stories, the hero is generally portrayed as an "average guy" like our sailor and, in his quest for truth and justice, has often to overcome the obstacles placed in front of him by 'niggling bureaucrats' who seek only to protect their own self-interest. Such representations seek to persuade viewers to identify with the hero as well as other "average guys" (sexist connotations intended) by constructing a shared 'other' in the form of governmental authorities and by reaffirming the epistemic superiority of 'commonsense'.

It is important to note, however, that while the use of irony in "Naming Canada" does work to bring the priest and Cartier back down to earth, the narrative of reconciliation which structures the Minute as a whole is in no way affected by this irony. Donnacona is consistently represented as trusting and open and there is nothing ironic about his invitation to enter 'Canada'. Nor is there anything ironic about the interest and willingness of the French to enter into free, uncoerced and open communication. In this Minute, therefore, a surface irony seems designed to flatter the viewer for her cleverness and her critical abilities in order to draw attention away from its hegemonic construction.

Any lingering questions about the Heritage Project's earnestness about the reconciliation narrative are quickly dispelled when we look at the next Minute in which the

native peoples are given a prominent role. "Maple Syrup" begins with a winter scene of a native family gathered in front of a tree. A white family then happens upon them and looks upon apprehensively (the youngest child even takes shelter behind a tree) as the native father cuts open the trunk using a metal knife and a stone hammer and inserts a shim that causes sap to flow from the tree. The scene then shifts ahead in time to portray the natives in the process of transforming the sap into syrup. The camera next pans to the French family which continues to look on in a perplexed manner. The natives then invite them over and introduce them to the miracles of syrup. The Minute ends with an indoor scene in which a woman writes by candlelight and a native man brings two bars of maple sugar to her table. As this action occurs, she narrates her letter: "Your majesty will be pleased to know that this year thanks to the help of our Indian friends, we have produced some 30000 pounds of this sweet gift" (Heritage Project, 1998).

The sequence of actions portrayed in "Maple Syrup" closely parallels that of "Naming Canada". We begin with one group and then the second arrives on the scene and the two look upon one another with apprehension. However, the initial apprehension and uncertainty eventually gives way to harmony and knowledge as one group invites the other to share some aspect of their world. What is interesting here is that in both Minutes, it is the native peoples who are called upon to share. While this might reflect a recognition on the part of their producers that sharing was never Western modernity's forte, I would suggest that a more compelling interpretation would be that which I advance above: these two Minutes are designed to reconfigure the European colonization of what Harold Innis called 'the northern half of North America' as a consensual process.

Furthermore, if we look closely at the ending scene of the Minute, we can see how this consensual process of 'cultural transfer' (as opposed to violent subjugation and appropriation) is also figured on Hegelian lines as a process of sublation. As will be recalled, the final scene shows a white woman writing as a native man brings two bars of maple sugar to her table. We then hear from her narration of her letter how "with the help of our Indian friends, we have produced some 30000 pounds of this sweet gift" (ibid.).

Three things are important to note in this scene. First of all, the native man is placed in the role of a servant or a supplicant bringing the white woman offerings. Secondly, the white woman is shown to be writing. This, I would suggest, is not accidental. As Francis Jennings argues in The Invasion of America (1976), the technology of writing has always occupied a central role in what he calls "the myth of civilization". In that work, Jennings details how the early anthropologist Lewis Morgan, for example, "fixed upon literacy as the invention that had created civilization. The highest stage of human development, he wrote, had begun with the phonetic alphabet" (Jennings, 1976: 9). In being represented as engaged in the act of writing, therefore, the white woman represents 'civilization' itself.

Thirdly, we hear how what was previously represented as an 'artisanal' production process among the natives has now apparently been reorganized by the French in a much more systematic and industrial manner. The underlying narrative thus runs as follows: the native brings to the attention of civilization a raw material whose potential he, in his primitive state, is incapable of realizing or even recognizing. It is the historical destiny of the civilized, however, to recognize and realize its potential through a rational reordering of the production process. Such a reorganization, the narrative concludes, has universally

providential consequences in that it greatly increases access to this 'sweet gift'. In other words, the combination of the resources of the colonized and the calculative powers of the colonizer usher a better world into existence. One does not have to know much about the history of colonialism to recognize the legitimacy powers of this narrative.

Saving Myths and Making Other 'Others'

While the native peoples appear now and then in a several other of the Minutes as, for example, military allies in "Laura Secord", they disappear from the Minutes after 1877. "Sitting Bull" is their last appearance and this Minute seems to be a departure from those we've examined so far in that it suggests a darker side to the native-European encounter. As its caption tells us, "Sitting Bull" is set on the Saskatchewan-Montana border in 1877. The first scene begins with an aerial 'long-shot' as we see a long cordon of American soldiers flanked by a handful of Mounties at its head. As the camera pans into the head of the cordon, we hear a voice with an American accent ask: "Hey, Mr. McLeod, where are the rest of your men?". A bearded Mountie then responds in a thick Scottish brogue: "You've got more men back there than I have in the whole of western Canada." The American General riding beside him then replies: "Yeah, but Sitting Bull held a war dance last night." Finally, McLeod responds: "General Terry, Sitting Bull has kept the Queen's peace. He's agreed to meet with you" (Heritage Project, 1998).

Right away, we can see how this Minute is founded on one of English Canada's central myths: the myth of the peaceful settlement of the Canadian west. As Eva Mackey argues in The House of Difference (1999), the initiating event of this myth was the founding of the RCMP in 1873. According to this myth, she writes, the RCMP was

viewed as bringing peace, order and good government to a previously 'lawless' land. Through their impartial administration of British justice, they protected the equally uncivilized whites and natives from harming one another. This myth was based on a construction of the native peoples as grateful, "child-like, trusting and ultimately friendly to their Canadian government invaders" (Mackey, 1999: 35). This myth of the "grateful Indian", she argues, was then deployed by Canadian nationalists to figure themselves as distinct and morally superior to the American 'Others' because it "allowed Canadians to nurture a sense of themselves as a just people, unlike the Americans south of the border who were waging a war of extermination against their Indian population" (Francis quoted in Mackey, 1999: 35).

This continuous comparison between the Canadian strategy of 'taming' the west through the impartial administration of justice and the American strategy of extermination explains why so much emphasis is placed upon the relative size of their American and the Canadian contingent in this Minute. It seeks to reaffirm the Canadian faith in "soft power"—persuasion, dialogue, compromise and negotiation—as a more efficient means of ensuring peace, harmony and prosperity as opposed to 'uncivilized' America's use of violence and to suggest that is somehow a Canadian invention. This message is then reiterated by McLeod's expression of his confidence that Sitting Bull will keep the "Queen's Peace".

By now, the discerning reader will no doubt notice the extensive use of message redundancy in the Minutes (no doubt, someone knew their Shannon-Weaver and Lévi-Strauss). The rest of "Sitting Bull" is a particularly obvious example of this communicative

strategy. After we are introduced to our two main terms of comparison—Colonel McLeod of the Mounties and General Terry of the U.S. Army in the first scene, our third major player is introduced in the second: Sitting Bull. This scene takes place indoors and begins with a closeup of a native warrior standing against a wall. The camera pans across the room filled with Canadian, American and native dignitaries and rests momentarily on Terry. We hear a door open and the attention of all those present shifts to Sitting Bull who has just entered. Terry then says to him: “President Hayes says you will be received kindly and...”. He is then cut off by Sitting Bull who replies: “The Grandmother’s medicine house is no place for lies. Not two more words. This country does not belong to you. We will stay here and keep the Grandmother’s peace. She will let us raise our children. We do not want lies. These men, Walsh and McLeod, they’re the first white men who have never lied to us.” Sitting Bull then turns his back on the American general and walks over to the two Mounties and shakes their hands.

If the Minute ended here, it would present the critic of the mythologization of history with an opportunity to engage in the proverbial ‘shooting fish in the barrel’. Here we have, once again, the juxtaposition of American barbarism, injustice and untruth with Canadian civility, truth and justice, the myth of ‘the grateful Indian’, the narrative of reconciliation and so on. However, it continues. As we watch Sitting Bull shake hands with Walsh and McLeod, the latter confesses in a voice-over that “I didn’t know then that they would be starved out of Canada and go back to the States. Walsh would resign over it and Sitting Bull would be murdered.” (Heritage Project, 1998). By introducing this new information, the comedy of “Sitting Bull” is transformed into a tragedy.

This indexing of the 'tragic' history of the brutal and even genocidal "Indian policies" of both Canadian and American government makes "Sitting Bull" stand out from the rest of the Minutes on native issues that we've already seen. What is interesting, however, is how, in spite of its admission that the history of native-white relations has not typically followed the story told in "Maple Syrup", it still tries to preserve the myth of the just Mountie and the bloodthirsty Yank. It does this in three ways. First, we are told by McLeod that he was unaware that Sitting Bull and the Sioux were to be starved out of Canada. This flies straight in the face of the documentary evidence. Grant MacEwan's Sitting Bull: the Years in Canada, for example, reprints a letter written by McLeod in the immediate aftermath of this failed parley in which he reports that "*I pointed out to them [the Sioux] that their only hope was the buffalo, that it would cease, and that they could expect nothing whatever from the Queen's government*" (quoted in MacEwan, 1973: 132, my italics). Furthermore, MacEwan reports that, at the commemorated meeting, both McLeod and Walsh repeatedly counseled Sitting Bull to accept the American proposal. The second way in which this Minute tries to save the myth of Mountie justice was to suggest that Walsh was so irate about Sitting Bull's forced repatriation that he resigned from the RCMP. Again, this runs counter to MacEwan's account. According to MacEwan, Walsh left the West and returned to his family home near Ottawa not out of disgust but as a result of poor health. Furthermore, he used his connections in Ottawa and Washington to help to arrange the best possible terms for Sitting Bull's surrender to the Americans. In other words, he did not protest Sitting Bull's repatriation, he engineered it.

Finally, we are told by the Minute that Sitting Bull was “murdered”. While it is true that Sitting Bull died in a gunfight with the American Indian Police, it would be a stretch to suggest, as does this Minute, that this event occurred directly as a result of his repatriation. Sitting Bull and the rest of the Sioux returned to the United States in 1881 and settled in a reservation in North Dakota. In the intervening years, he had a brief career touring with “Buffalo Bill” Cody’s Wild West Show and then settled down in North Dakota to live out his old age. In 1890, however, he became involved in a messianic cult that prophecized the rebirth of native culture and the recapture of the American west from the whites. This cult alarmed the American Indian Police and they sought to halt its spread amongst the Sioux by arresting Sitting Bull. A gunfight broke out and Sitting Bull, his son Crowfoot and several other Sioux as well as a number of policemen died.

Given the circumstances, the description of his death as a ‘murder’ becomes problematic. While one can accept that his death was the product of failed armed resistance to illegitimate state violence, I have trouble believing that it was a murder. First of all, the term ‘murder’ suggests a relative innocence on the part of the victim. In this case, the Sioux began the shooting at Sitting Bull’s bequest. Secondly, it also tends to suggest that the act was premeditated (this is why our legal system distinguishes between ‘murder’ and ‘manslaughter’). In this case, why the Indian Police were trying to silence him by removing him from the community, it does not appear that they began with any intention to kill him.

Given all this, the question becomes: Why does this Minute use the term “murder” as opposed to other terms such as “killed”? Such a characterization of Sitting Bull’s death

is necessary as part of this Minute's project to keep alive the good Mountie/bloodthirsty Yank dualism. If we were told that Sitting Bull died as a result of armed resistance initiated by his own people and that the Indian Police apparently acted in self-defense, we would have come up with a new frame of reference. However, by figuring Sitting Bull as a 'victim' who perished the moment he left the protection of the just Mountie and entered the barbaric lands to the south, white Canada keeps alive the myth of its virtuousness and moral superiority, of American barbarism and of the child-like and innocent native who is in need of our protection. When tied together with the falsified representation of the 'principled' stances of Walsh and Mcleod, we can see how, in spite of this seemingly tragic ending, "Sitting Bull" keeps the myth of the peaceful settlement of the Canadian west alive.

In "Sam Steele", the figure of the Mountie is deployed once again as a means of producing 'Canadian identity' by marshaling Canadian cultural differences from the all-too-similar Americans (there is a considerable historical irony at work here—many of those who are at the helm of *Historica* were also vehement supporters of the FTA and NAFTA agreements). While "Sitting Bull" suggests that the Canadian-American border acts as a haven from American racism and injustice (with the implied message that racism is an American problem of which morally superior Canadians are immune), "Sam Steele" tries to enforce the line between Americans and Canadians in a more obvious manner. It is set on the Alaska/Canada border in 1898 and begins with a lone prospector with a heavy American accent muttering to himself. The scene then cuts to the interior of a log cabin where the prospector sits at a table facing a stern but impassive Mountie while another

stands watch behind him. After the prospector reveals his intention to go the Klondike, the seated Mountie tells him that he cannot wear pistols and bring gambling gear into Canada. The prospector then draws his gun and points it at the seated Mountie and shouts: "I'm an American, you can't do this to me!". The Mountie remains ice-calm and replies: "In that case, I'll be lenient. We'll keep the gambling gear and you'll be back in the United States by sundown." In the final scene, we watch as the prospector is escorted back across the border while muttering to himself: "Why didn't I shoot him?" (Heritage Project, 1998).

This Minute falls within a long Canadian tradition of favourably comparing our 'national personality' with that of the Americans (New, 1998). In the Canadian nationalist imaginary, the so-called 'average American' has most of the characteristics of our Yankee prospector: cowardly, self-aggrandizing, bombastic, individualistic, violence-prone and parochial. The seated Mountie, on the other hand, represents the heroic virtues that this imaginary holds dear: bravery, calm, rationality and the commitment to the protection of 'peace, order and good government'. Such comparisons, Anna Makolkin argues, act as 'sign systems controlling group behaviour' (Makolkin, 1992). In other words, by ending the Minute with a scene of the boisterous Yankee being led back to the border, this Minute acts as both a celebration of so-called 'Canadian values' and as a prescription for future actions: like our heroic Mountie, Canadians should expel individualism, racism, greed, violence and ignorance from the Canadian body politic.

"Sitting Bull" and "Sam Steele" thus seek to reconcile Canadians through the reconstruction of cultural boundaries that allegedly distinguish us from the Americans. Such boundaries allow us to know ourselves by juxtaposing ourselves to external and

internal “Others”. This production of “Others”, it must be underlined, generally does not correspond to some sort of external ‘reality’ but instead is an act of projection through which the “Others” become a cipher for our own desires and fears. As Gordon Sayre argues, the ‘desired Other’ often takes the form of the Noble Savage—an Other for whom the modern experience of the alienation from self, nature and community does not exist. As we have already seen, the native peoples in the Heritage Minutes are represented along these lines as peaceful, open and living in close contact with tradition, nature and community. The ‘feared Other’, on the other hand, takes the form of the ‘Ignoble Savage’. Projected upon these ‘Others’, Sayre argues, are all of those characteristics which the Self identifies as the negation of its prized self-image. Furthermore, as often as not, the Ignoble Savage is constructed not just as being inferior to ‘us’ but as being an active conspirator against ‘our’ way of life (Sayre, 1997: 123-29). As the histories of anti-semitism, racism, ethnic and cultural nationalism, religious fundamentalism and even some contemporary critiques of the nebulous ‘forces of globalization’ all suggest, one of the best ways to rally the troops around the flag is to posit the existence of a powerful and threatening ‘Other’. In Canadian nationalist discourse, the all-too-similar Americans have often taken on the role of the marauding ‘Other’. We are, this discourse never tires of repeating, constantly under the threat of Americanization, creeping or otherwise. It is for this reason that the various border skirmishes fought along the American-Canadian border have occupied such an important place in the English Canadian nationalist imagination.

Marking Borders

“Frontenac” seeks to portray one such skirmish. It is set in Quebec in 1690 and begins with a scene of a group of blindfolded men in red coats being led through the streets of the town by a group of soldiers. A voiceover then informs us that “October 17, an envoy comes ashore with an ultimatum of surrender for Governor Frontenac”. They reach an archway, their blindfolds are removed and they prepare to pass through. Just then, a handsome young man who resembles one of the ‘Three Musketeers’ emerges from the surrounding crowd. With an exaggerated French accent, he then says: “It’s been a long time since I’ve seen the enemy this close”. He then begins taunting one of the redcoats and baits him into a duel. As they engage in swordplay, they also kindly take the time to fill in some of the historical detail surrounding the event. Our Musketeer asks the redcoat: “Does he [the redcoat General Phips] really think that he can conquer Quebec with just two or three ships?”. The redcoat then replies: “Monsieur, we have thirty-four ships and a full regiment from Boston. Frontenac has one hour to surrender”. This display of physical and verbal swordplay is then halted by the apparent leader of the redcoats and an older man wearing an elaborate wig. The leader of the redcoats then turns to the older man and says “Well, Governor Frontenac, your reply, sir?”. Frontenac looks at him sternly and retorts: “I’ll reply by the mouth of my cannons”. As the redcoats are then led off, a voiceover reveals that “The Americans pressed the attack but Frontenac beat them off. Phips weighed anchor and never returned” (Heritage Project, 1998).

“Frontenac” raises many interesting issues. First of all, there is the question of whether the events occurred as represented. As John Thompson admits in Minute by Minute, the sword fight is a complete fabrication whose main purpose is to entertain while

background information is being provided. However, there does seem to be a general consensus that Frontenac did give the clever and defiant reply that we saw in the Minute and that Phips was driven off. What this Minute does not mention, however, is that while the redcoats failed to take Quebec, they did take Acadia which was absorbed into Massachusetts for nearly a decade. Two reasons can best explain this lacuna. First of all, the Heritage Minutes are not interested in what happened, they selectively mine the past for heroic nation-building myths. Drawing attention to the history of the British attempts to forcefully assimilate the Acadians into the Anglo-American world picture runs the risk of subverting the whole project of representing Canada under English hegemony as the 'best of all possible worlds'. Secondly, the lacuna is more than likely also a product of the Central Canadian perception that the important events in Canadian history all take place in the Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal-Quebec nexus. All other events are of merely 'regional' or 'provincial' interest.

The second major historical question raised is that of Frontenac's qualification for his election into the Canadian 'hall of fame'. When placed in the context of his career of governor, his heroic retort to Phips starts to look like an anomaly. As W.J. Eccles reveals in Frontenac: the Courtier Governor (1959), Frontenac was a French aristocrat and the godson of Louis XIV who consistently assigned the colony's interests a secondary status in relation to his own project of filling his coffers so that he could enjoy a luxurious retirement in Paris. He and his henchmen traded furs illegally with the British, he used public monies and provisions for his private trading ventures, he continued to trade rum for furs in spite of the fact that evidence was mounting of the destructive effect of alcohol

on native society, he demanded free furs from the colony's native allies in exchange for their 'protection' and he had his competitors in the fur trade arrested and even executed. Furthermore, when the closest thing resembling a representative assembly in the colony, the Sovereign Council, sought to prevent him from abusing his power, he accused its members of sedition and jailed them (Eccles, 1959).

For the producers of this "Minute", such objections would probably be dismissed as mere 'details'. What makes Frontenac worthy of commemoration is that, in spite of everything else he might have done in his time on earth, on that day, he stood up to the marauding "Other". Furthermore, as is often the case in the construction of such threatening "Others", we learn from the dueling redcoat that he did so in spite of the fact that the marauders seemed to have an overwhelming force—34 ships and a full army division. In other words, on that one day, Frontenac became the Canadian David to the American Goliath and, like the former, he prevailed as a result of his superior courage, intelligence, God's favour and so on. Furthermore, like Biblical tales, this story has an exemplary character—in spite of the omnipresence of American culture, we would-be heroic Canadians are called upon to resist just like Frontenac.

In constructing the threatening and nearly-insurmountable "Others" as Americans, another historical inaccuracy plays an important role in determining the Minute's meaning. In 1690, there were no such things as 'Americans'. At that period, those who lived in places like New York and Boston still thought of themselves as 'British' or 'English'. Furthermore, any organized armed invasion of the colony of another European state would have been completely under British supervision. In other words, the events being

depicted would have been experienced by those ‘on the ground’ and described in history books as an attack by the British upon a French colony. As I have been arguing, one of the major reasons for the change of the name of the aggressors from “British” to “Americans” is that such a redescription supports the Canadian nationalist myth of Canada’s heroic struggle to preserve its superior way of life from the depredations of the powerful but degenerate Americans.

Narrative *Reconquista*

If we briefly look at how Frontenac’s words have been commemorated in the discourse of one of Canadian nationalism’s main competitors, Quebec nationalism, a second reason emerges. Once we recognize that Frontenac’s words have traditionally been placed in the context of British aggression against New France, we can then see how Frontenac’s reply to Phips could quickly gain an emblematic status as a slogan of Québécois resistance against the forces of anglicization. Given this, “Frontenac” is written with a doubly hegemonic intent. On the one hand, it seeks to rally Canadians in mutual defense against a constructed mutual enemy. On the other hand, it seeks to reduce the power of a competing form of collective belonging by appropriating one of the latter’s founding myths and integrating it into its own narrative.

This strategy of narrative *reconquista* recurs over and over again in the Minutes. “Étienne Parent”, for example, seeks to simultaneously draw two of the founding events of the Quebec nationalist “mythistory” into the Canadian national narrative. It is set in a jail and begins with a scene of a prisoner looking on as another is dragged down the hall by British soldiers while thrashing about and screaming slogans such as “We are the sons

of liberty!", "We wish to put an end to this corrupt regime!" and "You'll never succeed in getting rid of us!". The camera then pans on to the first prisoner who has now calmly taken his seat and begins to write. By means of a voice over, his words are revealed: "I am a patriot but I'm against this armed insurrection. We must reply to bureaucrats who stifle us. We can thrive through education, political economy and industry not armed rebellious acts. Our two races can live side-by-side without one enslaving the other." As we then watch how he and an accomplice successfully smuggle his writings out of the prison, a voice over in a second voice then narrates: "Jailed for such radical political ideas, Étienne Parent kept his paper *Le Canadien* going for months with a little help from his friends... A century later, the political ideas that had inspired Étienne Parent would reappear and transform Quebec in its Quiet Revolution" (Heritage Project, 1998).

For the researcher who is interested in how groups selectively read the past in order to support their contemporary political projects, this Minute is a veritable treasure trove. First of all, it is an admonition against all forms of revolutionary political action. We see this from the beginning with the juxtaposition of Parent with his sloganeering fellow prisoner. While Parent evinces the characteristics that are most highly prized in the bourgeois construction of adult masculinity—self-control and rationality, our revolutionary is portrayed as being 'savage' or childlike: uncontrolled, wild-eyed and histrionic. This juxtaposition is then extended by means of Parent's voice over. In the span of three sentences, we are told twice how he rejects the solution proffered by his fellow prisoner: armed rebellion. Instead, he advocates a more 'adult', 'pragmatic' and 'responsible' solution to the pressing problems of his time—the creation of a liberal social

order based on “education, political economy and industry”. Once this liberal utopia has been brought into being, his words suggest, the ‘stifling’ power of the bureaucracy will be reduced and ethnic tension between the French and English will be quelled.

In voicing this anti-revolutionary message, this Minute is as much, if not more, a prescription for what should happen in the present and the future than it is a description of the past. Like the ‘No’ side in the 1995 referendum which used forecasts of the dire economic consequences of separation to convince Quebecers to vote ‘No’, this Minute firmly identifies economic prosperity and social mobility as the most rational and efficient means of securing present and future human happiness. Furthermore, by means of his comparison to the sloganeer, Parent’s solution is then opposed to the extravagant and providential claims of wild-eyed revolutionaries like Parizeau and Bouchard that Quebecois national self-determination will somehow inaugurate a ‘heaven on earth’. In other words, in this Minute, the *Patriote* Étienne Parent becomes a spokesman for the federalist cause.

In order to repackage the Patriote Rebellion of 1837 as a means of defending the status quo, some fairly important details about those events had to be left out of this Minute. First of all, no mention is made of the cause of the rebellions beyond Parent’s allusion to ‘stifling’ bureaucrats. In most histories of the event, however, the conflict has been figured not as a conflict between radicals and bureaucrats but between the members of the rising French-Canadian professional class and an oligarchical group known as “the Château Clique”. This clique was composed of the wealthiest English merchants, senior members of the Catholic clergy and the most powerful seigneurs. From the early 19th

century until the Rebellions, this clique used its considerable influence with the governor to ensure that patronage funds flowed into their pockets and that the executive branch of the government would ensure the protection of their economic and legal interests.

During this period, the activities of the Château Clique came under increasingly sharp criticism and scrutiny by the *Parti Patriote* which was led by Louis-Joseph Papineau and whose official news organ was *Le Canadien* (edited by Parent between 1832 and 1837). While it began mainly as a French-Canadian nationalist party with loose ideological ties to American and French revolutionary thought, as the decades passed, it became more radical in its demand for democratic reform in Lower Canada. This demand for reform eventually led the Patriotes to advocate full-fledged armed rebellion in face of the intransigence of the entrenched oligarchy that sought to preserve its political and economically dominant position (Bercuson et al., 1992).

Looking back now at the Minute with this background information in mind, it takes on a very different character. Parent's apparent championing of a 'keep your mouth shut, go to school, work hard and watch every penny' strategy of social advancement acts as a rejection of politics. As we have seen, as they became more radicalized, Papineau and the *Patriotes* became increasingly convinced of the absolute value of politics and democracy as means of challenging the Château Clique's economic dominance of the colony. It is significant, therefore, that in this Minute, while democratic reform is never mentioned as a means of guaranteeing social happiness and easing ethnic tensions, it is implicitly associated with radicalism and thus rejected. Furthermore, no mention is made of the structural political and economic inequalities against which the *Patriotes* were

rebellious. Instead, the whole thing is blamed on the main scapegoat in contemporary neo-liberal thought—the nagging bureaucrat. In this manner, this Minute seeks to effect the depoliticization of the modern ‘road to happiness’. Radical democracy, this hegemonic tool of the contemporary version of the Château Clique suggests, will only get you in trouble. If you want to ensure peace, order and good government, simply take the steps to ensure that you will be a ‘productive’ member of society and leave the rest to us.

If the reader has any lingering doubts that this is the underlying message of this Minute, these will be quickly erased when we examine the sentence with which this Minute ends. As will be recalled, it tells us that “A century later, the political ideas that had inspired Étienne Parent would reappear and transform Quebec in its Quiet Revolution.” In other words, this Minute is suggesting that the Quiet Revolution was essentially apolitical. While it is true that this period was one in which the Quebec Liberal government of Jean Lesage launched major “modernizing reforms in education, limitations on the influence of the clergy, nationalization of the hydro-electric power industry” (McNaught, 1988: 306) and many other policies for encouraging, in the words of our nostalgized Parent, “education, political economy and industry”, it was hardly apolitical. It was fiercely nationalist in tenor and shared one important strategy with the *Patriotes*: the advocacy of political means for reducing “both American and English-speaking Canadian economic and cultural domination” (McNaught, 1988: 298).

In other words, the Quiet Revolution, like the *Patriote* Rebellion was political down to its very core and aimed directly at using democratic means to counter structural political and economic inequalities. What purpose is thus served by representing both

these events in the manner I've described? I would suggest that there are two main benefits. First of all, from the vantage point of the members of the political and economic elite who bankroll the production of the Heritage Minutes, the hegemonic value of encouraging cynicism towards radical democratic politics and a focus on 'individual responsibility', 'industry' and 'self-improvement' in the subject population are almost too obvious to state—a disenfranchised and individualized electorate is also a fatalistic electorate. As Adorno puts it: "One who weeps does not resist any more than one who marches" (Adorno, 1998: 208). Secondly, in reconfiguring these two events as essentially apolitical, this Minute seeks to also neutralize their exemplary power when they are pressed into service in the construction of a Quebecois national counter-myth. Again, as in "Frontenac", they are strategic fronts in the larger Canadian 'memory wars'.

In the Minute "Les Voltigeurs de Québec", we encounter a more lighthearted version of the same strategy of narrative capture. As its caption tells us, this Minute represents a rehearsal session of the regimental band, Les Voltigeurs de Québec, on June 23, 1880. It begins with the band finishing a piece and then getting up to leave. The band is then called back to its seats by the bandleader who informs them that "We are now going to rehearse the crowning touch for St. Jean-Baptiste day. This score has been composed especially for the event, so, gentlemen, please...". The band then bumbles its way through a rendition of what we now know as 'Oh Canada!' that ends in cacophony and laughter. The band leader then sharply taps his baton and remonstrates the band with the following words: "Messieurs, start over! This piece deserves better, hmm, and its authors are Canadian just like us. So please, gentlemen...". Thus chastened, the band then plays the

tune properly and a voiceover narrates: “The regimental band, the Voltigeurs de Québec. They gave the first public performance of the new piece by Calixa Lavallée and Basile Cloutier in Quebec City on St. Jean-Baptiste Day, 1880” (Heritage Project, 1998).

For those who might need to be reminded of such things, St. Jean Baptiste Day is the patron saint’s day of Quebec and has become the day to celebrate the Quebecois nation. It is not accidental, therefore, that the ad makes a great deal of the fact that the song being rehearsed (which has since become Canada’s national anthem) was composed to celebrate St. Jean Baptiste Day. In creating an association between ‘Oh Canada’ and St. Jean Baptiste Day, this ad seeks to bring St. Jean Baptiste Day (and, by extension, the centrifugal tendencies of Quebec nationalism) back into the Canadian national narrative.

This project of reinscription becomes even more explicit in the use of the phrase “they are Canadian, just like us”. The word “canadien” was first developed by the French settlers of New France to distinguish themselves from their French and later their English colonial masters. Over time, English settlers also gradually adopted “Canadian” as a term of self-identification. In response to this adoption/appropriation (depending on your politics), the French speaking population of Quebec has more recently taken to referring to itself as “Quebecois”. For them, “canadiens” are increasingly identified with English-speaking Canadians. Therefore while the bandleader’s reference to the composers as ‘Canadians just like us’ might be an historically accurate representation of 19th century linguistic practices, it is also an act of interpellation in the present which also attempts to remind Quebecers of their ‘Canadianness’.

This reminder, however, is not without its ambiguities. If we recall the sequence of actions in the Minute, we will see how the reconstitution of memories of lost national unity seems to depend on the restoration of memories of a completely different sort. To repeat, the sequence of action runs as follows:

1. The (coded French) band gets up to leave after practice.
2. They are called back to their seats by the band leader.
3. They bumble through a rendition of 'Oh Canada!' that ends in cacophony and laughter.
4. The bandleader, with a sharp tap of his baton, remonstrates the band and reminds them of their duty to honor the composition of their fellow Canadians.
5. Thus chastened, the band plays the tune properly.

For someone who has studied colonial writings, there is something comforting and familiar about this video. The representation of the band as innately childish, lazy and anarchic is of a piece with complaints of the Jesuit missionaries about the native peoples or Durham's characterization of the Quebecois in his famous Report. So too is their relationship with the bandleader. Depending on one's focus, the bandleader can be read as the unitary principle ordering a chaotic reality, the mind to the band's body or the superego to its id. However, while those and other tropes do contribute indirectly to the text's meaning, there are more immediate cultural resonances that figure this relationship. In relation to the band, the bandleader occupies a subject position that was vital to the historical functioning of colonialism in Quebec. Like the local *curé* or schoolteacher, he is one of the many local elites who, in exchange for power and prestige, worked for the colonial power to keep the locals 'mindful of their duty' towards the state. In the video, this is done with the combination of an implied threat of institutionally sanctioned violence (the sharp rapping of the baton on the music stand echoes that of the schoolmaster's strap across the knuckles) and moral suasion. Through his actions, the bandleader is able to

reform the unruly mass into a melodious whole working jointly to allow the symphony called 'Canada' to leave behind its cacophonous origins and enter a realm of harmony.

At least in this example, therefore, it would seem that the nostalgia for memory of the central Canadian elite is tightly interwoven with a nostalgia for some of the disciplinary mechanisms by which the minds and bodies of the 'masses' were kept 'in line'. In an odd way, therefore, it could be suggested that the bandleader is an imaginary projection of the desires that drive the 'Heritage Project'. In reminding various potentially disorderly Canadian of their duty to their 'heritage', the Heritage Project seeks to produce the same results as the bandleader: respect for tradition, unity and harmony.

This strategy of narrative capture and neutralization is at its boldest in "Louis Riel". This Minute centers on Riel's final thoughts as he stands on the gallows waiting to be hanged. During the course of a six sentence interior monologue, his second sentence is "let them remember that I struggled for the Métis, for the people of Manitoba and the Northwest" and then his monologue concludes with: "I've struggled not only for myself but for the rights of my people". In case we did not quite get the point, these concluding words are then followed with a woman doing a voice over in which she tells us that "Louis Riel led our Métis nation and he gave us hope and strength to fight". What is the point of this repeated identification of Riel with the Métis? In *Minute by Minute*, John Thompson explains that by particularizing Riel as a Métis leader, "We took Louis Riel away from French Canada and we took him away from Westerners" (Heritage Project, 1998). In other words, this re-presentation of Riel seeks to deprive two competing counter-

narratives of a hero who was martyred by the hands of either central Canada or the English. The telling of history is apparently a zero-sum game.

The Unsaid of the Heritage Minutes

Along with this strategy of redescription, the Minutes make extensive use of another important strategy of neutralizing persons or events that might support competing counter-narratives: silence. As we saw from our discussion of Freud and Macherey, the ‘unsaid’ or the silences of the text play an important structuring role in the text because they represent the disturbing thoughts and desires or traumatic memories that the manifest text seeks to suppress and neutralize. The most obvious silence in the Minutes, as David LeDoyen points out, is the missing eighteenth century. Between the Minute on Frontenac set in 1690 and one on Hart and Papineau set in 1807, almost twelve decades are missing from the Heritage Project’s version of Canadian history. Following LeDoyen, I suspect that the reason for this is that much of what occurred in that period in Canadian history, especially the second half of the 18th century, is still an open sore for many.

While the period from 1713 to 1744 were the most peaceful in the history of New France and Acadia, the next half-century would be characterized by a near-constant state of war as the British and the French and then the British and the Americans battled over control of the continent. On the face of it, this would seem to be a good thing for our lovers of heritage. Wars, after all, have always been particularly popular subjects of commemoration. However, for the purpose of creating a harmonious national memory in a multicultural country, the wars fought in 18th century Canada present distinct problems.

One reason was because, during the course of these struggles, the threat, if not the reality, of what we now call 'ethnic cleansing' was omnipresent. From 1744 until 1764, the British and the French and their native allies waged a series of battles across fronts ranging from the Ohio valley to the plains of Abraham over control of the northern half and the western interior of the continent. While the British ultimately gained the military upper hand, they lost badly in the moral register (the one on which the Minutes primarily work) as a result of two main events. First of all, in 1755, the British initiated the expulsion of up to 10000 Acadians from what is now southern New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia. The rationale for this program was that in spite of the fact that many had lived peacefully under British rule since 1713, their French heritage would lead them to support the French in this imperial struggle. Stripped of all of their possessions and the lands that had been in the family for as much as a century, as many as a third of these deportees would die from starvation and disease such as smallpox, typhoid and yellow fever as they struggled to re-establish themselves in the backwoods of Louisiana, Massachusetts or Virginia (Ferguson, 1996; Lester, 2001).

In comparison to what the British did to quell the Pontiac rebellion, on the other hand, this program of 'ethnic cleansing' seems positively humane. After the British defeated the French on the Plains of Abraham, they assumed control over the territory and the fur trade around the Great Lakes and in the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys. Discontent with the new trading regime combined with a flow of American settlers west of the Appalachians into what the native peoples considered their sovereign lands to create widespread discontent among the former French allies. Pontiac, an Ottawa chief who lived

in the Detroit region, became the focal point for this widespread discontent. In 1763, he organized a pan-Indian confederacy whose aim was to drive the British out of the lands west of the Ohio Valley. In May 1763, this confederacy successfully captured every British fort west of Niagara, with the exception of Detroit. Faced with the loss of these newly-gained lands, the British General Amherst then hatched a diabolical scheme. As a 'peace offering', the British gave the Indians blankets and clothing that had been intentionally infected with smallpox. The disease quickly raged through the native army and it was dispersed (Lester, 2001).

While these and other unsavory events such as the treatment of the Black Loyalists contributed to the less than heroic character of the 18th century, two other events also occurred in the 18th century which continue to define the contours of the Canadian nationalist imaginary: the Conquest and the American Revolution. For many French-Canadians, the memory of the Conquest is still experienced as a traumatic act of violence from which the Québécois nation is only now just beginning to recover. Other Québécois, however, seek to minimize its impact by arguing that the *canadiens* simply looked upon it as a change in administration which did not affect their lives while still others argue that while it rescued the habitants from an absolutist and mercantilist government or from the revolutionary excesses that swept France in the decades after the Conquest (Francis et al, 1988).

As might be guessed, the acceptance of one or another of these interpretations of this past event inevitably means accepting a political position in regards to contemporary Canada. For example, the avowed sovereigntist Normand Lester figures the events as a

‘total war’ waged against the *habitants* by the British. In the face of this belligerence, he writes, “Toute la population française participe à la guerre... Les Canadiens défendent leur mode de vie, leur religion leur pays contre l’envahisseur anglais, l’ennemi héréditaire” (Lester, 2001: 40-41). Given this, he concludes, the attempts by some to minimize the impact of the Conquest on Quebec society “s’insèrent dans la grande opération de réinvention de l’histoire à des fins politiques, avec le soutien financier de divers organes et officines de propagande de l’État fédéral” (Lester, 2001: *ibid.*). In other words, Lester here figures as the ‘true’ account of the Conquest that which is most consonant with the sovereignist political project: an act of terror by the marauding English which was stoutly defended by unified *canadiens* determined to protect their way of life. All competing accounts, on the other hand, are dismissed as federalist propaganda.

Add to this variety of interpretations of the event within Quebecois culture an equally wide and equally controversial variety stemming from English Canada and it will be quickly clear that its potential as a vehicle of reconciliation is low. Following the logic of “fools rush in...”, it would seem that those behind the Heritage Project made the decision to leave this event in the past. That does not mean, however, that it is completely absent from the Heritage Minutes. I would suggest that the Conquest, and especially the interpretation of it as the preeminent episode of a four century-old endeavor by the English to destroy and/or assimilate French Canada, acts as the hidden background or historical unconscious against which many of the dramas of reconciliation written into Heritage Minutes play out. These Heritage Minutes are designed to act as what Freud calls a ‘screen memory’—a vivid, banal and often fictionalized memory that is tangentially

related to a traumatic memory but evoked as 'what really happened' by the patient in order to repress the pain and anxiety created by trauma. In the mode of reconciliation, the Heritage Minutes are memories created to 'help' French Canadians and other victims of English Canadian violence repress the pain of collective trauma and to 'be happy'. However, as Freud liked to point out, repressed memories of trauma have a curious way of returning.

The other second defining historical trauma that occurred in this 'missing 18th century' was the American Revolution and the exile of the Loyalists to the wilds of British North America. The Loyalists were American settlers who supported the British during the American War of Independence. After the War ended, many of them were branded by members of the new republic as 'un-American', their assets and properties were seized and they were forced to flee their homes and resettle in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, the Montreal area, Quebec's Eastern township and along the western shores of Lake Ontario. As a result of the sting of this forced exile, the elitism and conservatism that already existed in their thought evolved into an anti-democratic and anti-American tendency that still characterize English-Canadian thought today. As Jack Granatstein argues in Yankee Go Home?, this cast of thought acted as a psychic defense mechanism that allowed the Loyalists to accept exile and even celebrate it as a chance

to recreate what they believed they had lost—"a conservative, deferential, loyal society, especially suited to the conditions of the land and the people"... The society the Loyalist leaders sought to create was different from that of the new United States. South of the line, the Americans professed democracy, a belief that, to the Loyalists, meant turning over control of government to mob rule... Democracy was the tyranny of the majority at its worst. Such statements were always presented as fact and were psychologically vital to the Loyalist population of British North

America. How else could they justify the hard choice they had made? British North America was different from the democracy to the south, for its governing few, it was an explicitly counter-revolutionary and deeply conservative society.” (Granatstein, 1996: 16-17)

The Loyalist dream of creating a counter-revolutionary, deeply conservative and explicitly anti-American social and political order in British North America continues to structure the contours of Canadian public culture. Its counter-revolutionary and conservative character has led to a rejection of revolution, radical democratic politics and popular participation in favour of a predilection for compromise, gradualism and an administrative and elitist approach to collective problem-solving. As Daniel Francis puts it, it is a function of the Loyalist legacy that Confederation “was, and is, the dominant image of political change for Canadians. Not heroic figures storming the bastions of privilege, or raising the flag of liberty, but instead, a group of men in suits haggling around a conference table.” (Francis, 1997: 87). In other words, while this conservative bent has prevented instances of politically-motivated bloodshed on the scale of the French or American Revolutions in Canada, it has also led to the development of a distinctly anti-democratic culture in English Canada. Granatstein traces the roots of this anti-democratic character back to the charter slogan of a Canada built on Loyalist principles. The Loyalists, he wrote, “stood for law and order, not rebellion, for the British constitution, not republicanism, and for a hierarchical society in which rank had its recognized privileges, not democratic egalitarianism. Peace, order, and good government, in other words; not life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (Granatstein, 1996: 32).

Along with antidemocratic and authoritarian tendencies, the second important cultural legacy bequeathed by the Loyalists is English Canada’s complex and contradictory

relationship to America. As we have seen, when they arrived in British North America, the Loyalists set out to create an economically prosperous and morally superior polity that would be defined as the explicit negation of the American republic that was taking form. In this way, they sought to reduce the sting of exile by trying to convince themselves that, in the words of one Loyalist, "By heaven, we will be the envy of the American states" (quoted in Bell, 1992: 68). In other words, English Canada's tendency to define itself in comparison to the United States and to crave American recognition was present from the beginning of the English settlement of Canada. As the decades passed, however, this purely negative anti-Americanism became tinged with begrudging admiration, resentment and envy as it became clear to the Loyalists that the economic development of the country they had left behind was far outstripping that of their new country. Faced with this economic reality, Canada's moral superiority was affirmed with increasing vehemence.

As David Bell argues, this remains the case into our present day and has had a treble deleterious effect. First of all, he argues, it cultivates a smug and self-righteous self-image in English Canada that has the effect of hindering self-criticism. Secondly, the obsession with comparing Canada with the United States has had a paralytic effect on the English Canadian political and cultural imagination because it reduces the multiplicity of 'ways of being' in a procrustean manner down to a simplistic American-Canadian dichotomy. Thirdly, the habit of comparing and seeking the praise and recognition of the other ("we will be the envy...") creates a national inferiority complex.

As our reading of Minutes like "Sitting Bull" and "Sam Steele" has shown, the Loyalist legacy of favourably comparing our national moral character to that of the United

States is alive and well in the Heritage Project. Furthermore, as we shall see in the next chapter, in many of the Minutes that celebrate Canadian inventions or contributions to global popular culture, American recognition of these Canadian acts of innovation is often central to the narrative of those Minutes. When we combine this recognition of the enduring Loyalist legacy in many of the Minutes with that of how the Minutes act as 'screen memories' to repress the trauma of the Conquest, we then see how the missing 18th century structures the Heritage Project as a whole. The Heritage Project is part of English (central) Canada's continued attempt to make itself feel better about the choices it made at the same time that it seeks to make the French-Canadians and the native population forget about the fact that they were violently deprived of the power to make choices about the nature of the country in which they lived.

The Redemption of English Canada

One of the major narrative strategies used in the Minutes to reaffirm the central Canadian elite's sense of its own superior morality and to convince the 'Others' who have been the victims of its aggression of the same thing is to make extensive use of the emplotment of events along the lines of what Mark Golub calls "Hollywood redemption history". Golub argues that such a history follows a very specific plot sequence:

1. The central issue of the film is some sort of social injustice such as racism or genocide.
2. The injustice is one over which the mainstream audience feels a sense of guilt.
3. The lead character, with whom the audience is intended to identify "is a charismatic white man who is either committed to fighting against the social injustice or is made to recognize that injustice over the course of the film." (Golub, 1998: 27)
4. The film ends with a heavy sense of closure as a result of the resolution of the injustice.

In his review of films such as Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and *Amistad*, Golub argues that while such films are an improvement on traditional Eurocentric Hollywood films that are content to reproduce racist stereotypes, they are not above criticism. That is because while they seek to help the subaltern to speak, that speaking is "only a precursor to the 'psychological' healing that the films are meant to enact: watching and acknowledging the suffering of others becomes the price-tag for absolution of responsibility for the very suffering that is so vividly depicted" (Golub, 1998: 29). This absolution of responsibility, he argues, is created by a combination of textual strategies. The first is to narrate the story in a manner that encourages the audience to identify with the hero who rescues the oppressed and downtrodden from the depredations of a thoroughly demonized oppressor. Such a strategy of narration of lionization and demonization, he argues, allows the audience to expiate any lingering sense of guilt because it nearly precludes the possibility that the audience will identify with the oppressor. Furthermore, by representing the hero as the 'savior' of the passive oppressed, it preserves the dominant group's position of moral and political leadership.

A second important strategy is to invoke closure at the end of the film. Such a strategy allows the guilt over injustice to be safely contained in the past. As we saw from the response to Lester's book, it is a commonplace in English Canadian culture to admit past instances of racism but then to dismiss racism as 'a thing of the past'. Such a strategy combines nicely with the third and fourth strategies: the use of the narrative of reconciliation and redemption. Narratives of reconciliation, Golub argues, are stories about how past racism has been overcome as a result of the willingness of competing

groups to recognize the full humanity of the other group through their shared participation in a common project. By detailing the process by which the two groups move towards the recognition of the 'Other', the narrative of reconciliation is then transformed into a narrative of redemption in which "The harm of the historical injury is not only contained in the past, but comes to be seen as an aberration, and so does not discredit the monumentalizing stories that make up the American historical mythology. The 'real us' prevails over its darker side..." (Golub, 1998: 32).

The Heritage Minute "Hart and Papineau" faithfully follows the sequence described by Golub. It is set in Quebec's Lower Assembly in 1807 and begins with a scene of a middle-aged man placing his hand on the Torah and announcing that: "I, Ezekiel Hart, seignior of des Concours and duly elected deputy of Trois-Rivières, hereby swear...". He is then interrupted by another man who stands up and shouts: "Sacrilege! The oath must be sworn as a true Christian and you're not. Expulsion!". Most of the assembled crowd then pounds on the table and cheers in support except one—a young man whom a caption identifies as Louis-Joseph Papineau. The scene then shifts to Papineau speaking to the man who led the calls for Hart's expulsion. We watch as the young man pleads: "He was elected, father, by the Catholics of Trois-Rivières. Even the priest supported him. Who are we...". As he speaks the last words, his father brusquely walks off and Hart comes near and challenges him as follows: "Monsieur Papineau, you have learned well from your elder. Or have you?" (Heritage Project, 1998).

In these first few sequences, this Minute follows the sequence described by Golub. It begins by introducing a social injustice—in this case, anti-Semitism—and then

introduces the oppressor in the figure of the brusque, arrogant and racist Papineau Sr. (who represents our unredeemable 'aberrant' past), the victim in the form of Hart and the heroic savior in the form of Papineau Jr. (the figure of Canada's 'real' historical destiny). The scene then shifts to the Assembly twenty-five years later where we watch a now middle-aged Papineau read a proclamation granting Jews full political rights in the colony. The final scene shows Papineau supporting an elderly Hart as the two make their way down the Assembly's step. A voiceover then informs us that the Assembly granted the Jews full citizenship "twenty-five years before the same rights were granted anywhere in the British Empire" (Heritage Project, 1998).

Before continuing the discussion of "Hart and Papineau" as a redemption history, a couple of things need to be noted. First of all, like many of the Minutes, it tells stories about the past in hopes of influencing present and future behaviour. In this case, this Minute constructs a Quebecois hero (Papineau Jr. led the *Patriote* Rebellion) as a defender of Jewish rights and an opponent of anti-Semitism. In so doing, the memory of his heroism is called upon to play an exemplary role for Canadians as a whole but for Quebecois in particular. Furthermore, in the Minute "Paulette Vanier", this message is repeated again for good measure as it details Vanier's struggle to overcome Canada's anti-Semitic immigration laws in order to shelter the victims of the Holocaust. This duplication might be read as an index of the producers' conception of at least one intended audience—the Quebecois. The fact that they reiterate the same message suggests that they view anti-Semitism as being rooted in Quebec society and these Minutes are constructed

in hopes of rectifying this ethnocentric tendency. Again, through this imagination of the Quebecois audience, racism thus becomes an Other's problem.

Secondly, it is interesting to note that this Minute concludes with a favorable comparison between the actions of Quebec's Lower Assembly and the rest of the British Empire on the question of Jewish citizenship rights. This would seem to invalidate the previous argument that the U.S. typically acts as the main object of comparison for the Canadian nationalist imagination. However, I do believe that a brief look at the historical record will reveal that this comparative reflex still structures this Minute. I would suggest that the reason a comparison is not made with the U.S. here is that Jews had the right to vote in many states by the late 18th century. In other words, if this Minute explicitly compared Canada with the U.S., Canada would come up short. Therefore, a second object of comparison was found that would preserve English Canada's sense of moral superiority.

To return to my discussion of the redemption narrative, if the scene set in 1807 introduced us to our injustice, our victim, our oppressed and our hero, the scene set in 1832 closes the book on that injustice. As we have seen, Papineau redeems Canadian history through an act of 'divine parricide'—like many mythic heroes, he brings a higher realm of existence and experience into being by demolishing the unjust world created by his father and willing a more just world into existence. As the final scene showing Papineau supporting Hart suggests, while this Minute is presumably about Jewish experience, Hart appears in this Minute as a purely passive victim. Papineau is the true hero who takes on the role of emancipating the Jews. In representing him as hero, this

Minute seeks to reaffirm the place of Canada's 'two founding' peoples as the heroes leading the ineluctable march towards freedom, reconciliation and progress.

The strategy of constructing the 'two founding peoples' as the agents of Canada's progress from an ethnocentric past to a 'tolerant' and 'multicultural' present and future recurs over and over again in the Minutes. "Underground Railroad", for example, begins with a shot of a young black woman anxiously peering out a church window. She then begins to shout in a panicked voice: "They should have been here by now. He's three hours late already. Paw ain't gonna make it. One of them slave catchers caught him...". As she continues to panic, a white woman emerges from the background and rushes over to calm the young woman by physically restraining her and telling her that: "Liza, you both [nodding towards a young black man standing in the background] made it past the border yesterday. We've done this before." She then takes the young woman by the hand and tries to lead her towards a pew in order to pray. The young black woman, however, breaks free and runs out into the street and the white woman follows. After a few seconds, they both come to a halt and the white woman gives a knowing smile. The camera then follows their line of sight to a wagon laden with church pews. Liza is then calmly led back to the church where we watch as the bottom is removed from the pew. As this action occurs, a voiceover tells us that "Between 1840 and 1860, more than 30000 American slaves came secretly to Canada and freedom.". When the pew is opened, an older black man crawls out and embraces Liza and her brother. As they celebrate their reunion, the father shouts "We're free!" and Liza responds: "Yes, Paw. We're in Canada" (Heritage Project, 1998).

The myth of the Underground Railroad has always been cherished as an important index of Canadian moral superiority vis-à-vis the Americans. In this myth, the Canadian border acts as a refuge from American racism. However, as with all myths, its rhetorical power is based as much on its silences as on its 'historical reality'. While it is true that many escaped American slaves did take refuge in Canada in this period, they were hardly accepted with open arms. As Douglas Francis et al. detail in Origins: Canadian History to Confederation, most of the escaped slaves returned to the United States "after the passage of the Emancipation Act of 1863, having found temporary refuge, but no more tolerance than they had experienced in the United States" (Francis et al. 1988: 283). The experience of the escaped slaves was echoed by that of the Black Loyalists who had fought along side the British in the War of Independence and settled primarily in Nova Scotia. In comparison to their white counterparts, they were granted much smaller land grants on hard-scrabble lands with the result that most were forced to work as share-croppers on land owned by whites. As a result, almost half of the Black Loyalists left Nova Scotia in the late 18th century to emigrate to Sierra Leone. Finally, this myth also suggests that slavery was an American problem but this is also untrue. From the time of Champlain until the late 18th century, blacks worked as slaves for white settlers. Furthermore, when slavery was finally abolished in the late 18th century, the rationale was as much economic as it was moral. As Francis et al. explain, slavery was "an expensive proposition in a northern area like Upper Canada. The short Canadian growing season ruled out such crops as cotton, which required a cheap, plentiful labour force. Also, owners had to feed, clothe, and house slaves throughout a long and unproductive winter" (Francis et al., 1988: 202).

All of these historical 'details' about the experience of blacks and other minority groups in Canada are left in the shadows by this and other Minutes because they are not really about their experience. It is almost inevitable that when a clearly marked member of a minority group shows up in one of the Minutes, they are almost always represented as passive victims of racism who have been saved by the agency of white Canada. In other words, in spite of the fact that they suggest that they are 'inclusive' of subaltern memory, these Minutes constantly reaffirm the centrality of white heroes in the Canadian national narrative.

We see this reaffirmation at work in "Underground Railroad" in the implicit comparison between Liza and the white woman. From the beginning, Liza is portrayed in true colonialist fashion as incapable of policing herself—she shouts, she panics, she seems to have little control over her bodily impulses. The white woman, on the other hand, represents the 'policed' self. Her words are careful and her movements are controlled. Like the missionary, she takes it upon the 'white (wo)man's burden' of settling Liza by physically restraining her, leading her to the pew and verbally reassuring her that the superior self-control of the white Canadians will keep their secret safe. When the child-like Liza initially rejects her reassurances and bursts out into the street, we then see her get her epistemic comeuppance as the wagon pulls into view and the knowing smile flashes across the white woman's face. With the superior moral and intellectual qualities of white Canada thus reaffirmed, we are then treated to a celebration of the glorious justice of Canada under its wise white leadership.

Similarly, in “Jackie Robinson”, while the drama of the Minute centers around Jackie Robinson’s heroic breaking of the color barrier in major league baseball, white Canada is given a co-starting role through a comparison to the racist Americans. This Minute details how Robinson made his professional debut in Montreal in front of wildly supportive fans. This warm reception is then juxtaposed to that of the opposite team which hails, as their jerseys tell us, from Newark. When Robinson first steps up to the plate, the coded American pitcher immediately hits him with a fastball. However, Robinson gets up and, with the vociferous support of the ‘open and tolerant’ Montreal fans, goes on to dominate the opposition.

This use of the relative treatment of blacks to celebrate Canadian moral superiority even finds its way into “Springhill Mine Disaster”. In this Minute, a black collier tells the story of the Springhill Mine Disaster of 1958 in which 74 miners were killed and he and six others were trapped underground for eight days. We learn how they kept their spirits up by singing hymns together and that once they were rescued, they were all offered a free vacation in the southern States. This then becomes the pretext by which the Canada-U.S. comparison gets introduced once again into the Minutes. He then tells us that the Americans told him that “I couldn’t stay with the others because of my colour”. Furthermore, if we were still unsure about the differences between tolerant and pluralistic Canada and the racist U.S., his narrative then circles back to the disaster and concludes with “So much death...but my, didn’t we sing those hymns...” and then with a dramatic pause, he looks straight into the camera and emphatically concludes “...together!” (Heritage Project, 1998). In other words, what begins as a memorial to the victims of an

industrial disaster is transformed into an assertion of Canada's inclusiveness and moral superiority.

While most of the redemption histories discussed in this section deal with examples of white heroes saving various victims of racism, there is one Minute that seems to break the mold. "Baldwin and Lafontaine" is set on election day in Quebec, 1841 and begins with a scene of a group of men carrying lanterns and torches walking down a darkened street. As they walk, they chant "Lafontaine! Lafontaine!". They are then met by another group that blocks their way. In French (with English subtitles), a member of the first group shouts: "Let us through. We have the right to vote!". In English, a thuggish-looking member of the second group replies: "Lousy rebels! Governor Sydenham says that your lot ain't got no right to nothing!" A scuffle then ensues but ends when the leader of the French party shouts "No violence!" and holds firm to this stance even as one of his supporters asserts that "You'll lose the election then". The scene then shifts to an indoor scene in which the French leader stares pensively out a window. A maid enters the room and hands him a letter from Robert Baldwin inviting him to run for election in Ontario. The scene then shifts a final time to a harbourfront where the man we now know to be Louis Lafontaine is greeted by Robert Baldwin. As the scene fades out, Baldwin says to Lafontaine: "Monsieur Lafontaine, think of the history we'll make when a French-Canadian runs and wins in York." A voiceover then concludes the Minute by informing us that "And they did make history. Together Robert Baldwin and Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine would forge the basis of responsible government in Canada" (Heritage Project, 1998).

For writers like John Ralston Saul, the alliance formed by these two reformers inaugurated a Canadian political tradition of compromise, mutual respect and appreciation of the concerns of the other that later found expression in Confederation, Laurier nationalism, the Trudeau years and so on. While I agree that there is much to be admired in the actions of both men, the question is why was this particular episode of their alliance the one chosen for commemoration. As Eva Mackey argues, the role of the critic of the political use of memory is primarily that of examining “*who* decides *when* and *how* Aboriginal people, French people or more recent immigrants, are or aren’t managed, in the interests of the nation-building project. These cultural groups become infinitely manageable populations as well as bit players in the nationalist imaginary, always dancing to someone else’s tune. They become helpmates in the project of making a Canadian identity that defines itself as victimized by outsiders and tolerant of insiders.” (Mackey, 1999: 49).

In this case, Lafontaine is portrayed as the innocent victim of English racism. Blocked by English thugs from voting, he retreats into the stance of the beautiful and noble loser. In the end, however, English Canada is redeemed by the bold and generous actions of the real agent of change: Robert Baldwin. In so doing, a hierarchy of heroes and victims seems to have been created. On one end of the spectrum, we have the pure victims—Jews, blacks and natives. In the middle, we find the French Canadians. In most instances, they are the heroes. In “Baldwin and Lafontaine”, however, they play the role of victim waiting to be redeemed by the only group that is more heroic. This group is the English Canadians who are the sole occupants of the other end of the spectrum. To my

knowledge, they never once play the role of passive victims in the Heritage Minutes.

Instead, they are always cast in the active roles of oppressors or heroes. They continue to be represented, in other words, as the motor force of Canadian history that draws all others in its train.

Redemption Narratives

As we have seen in “Baldwin and Lafontaine”, while these Minutes do index instances of English Canadian intolerance, they always do so in a manner that suggest that English-Canadians have left that intolerance ‘in the past’. That is because, like “Baldwin and Lafontaine”, many of these narratives of reconciliation are plotted along the lines of classical comedy. In the classical comedy, conflict between group and group and old ways and the new characterize the starting point of the narrative but subsequent events move ineluctably towards a Hegelian form of reconciliation in which the dross of the past and of parochialism is left behind and a ‘new and improved’ world is brought into being. In “Baldwin and Lafontaine”, Sydenham’s thugs represent English-Canada’s ethnocentric past. With his bold initiative, Baldwin is represented as overcoming that heritage. In so doing, as the concluding voiceover tells us, he and Lafontaine ushered in Canada’s adulthood in the form of ‘responsible government’.

We can also see this comic redemption of instances of English-Canadian racism in a Minute titled ‘Nitro’. This Minute details the construction of what has been mythicized in English Canadian culture as the skeleton that holds together the Canadian body politic: the CPR. “Nitro” is set in the Rockies and begins with a white foreman offering a group of Chinese labourers boat fare to Canada for their wives if they dare place a bottle of

nitroglycerin in a railroad tunnel which is being excavated. One young man volunteers and advances into the tunnel. An explosion follows and the white foreman looks on impassively and simply says to another: "Damn! That's the third we've lost this month. Get another volunteer" (Heritage Project, 1998).

If the Minute ended here, it would have been a fairly poignant depiction of the racism and brutality faced by Chinese labourers when they arrived in Canada to work on the railroad. However, in true comic fashion, it ends by redeeming Canada. Following the foreman's words, we are then surprised to see our volunteer stagger out of the tunnel, soot-covered but still alive. The scene then flashes to Vancouver, 50 years later, where our volunteer, now a distinguished older man dressed in a three piece suit, sits in a comfortably appointed drawing room with grandchildren at his knee. With a photograph album on his lap, he tells them that "I lost many friends. They say that there is one dead Chinese man for every mile of the track." (Heritage Project, 1998) In re-presenting our volunteer as prosperous and surrounded by family, the narrative shifts away from an exploration of racism to a celebration of opportunity, reconciliation and the willingness of Asian-Canadians to sacrifice their lives to the Canadian nation-building project. In White's terms, conflict in the short term gave rise to justice, truth and beauty in the long run. This performs the dual function of integrating Asian-Canadians into the national narrative at the same time that its 'all's well that ends well' conclusion expiates any lingering sense of guilt among white Anglo-Canadians about the sins of their fathers.

In "Myrnam Hospital", so-called "new Canadians" are called on to reaffirm the Canadian nationalist narrative in another way as new vehicles for the Canadian genius for

compromise. This Minute begins with a scene of a young child dying as a result of a lack of medical services. The scene then shifts to a town hall meeting where a speaker faces an audience whose members are arguing with one another. He then shouts in English over the cacophony that “Lara wouldn’t have died if this community could agree on a real hospital...if we can forge our differences.” Galvanized by this speech, a member of the audience gets up and says in a Slavic language (subtitled in English): “I can manage fifty dollars!”. A second stands and says in German: “We built the best barn” and a third says in Ukrainian: “So we’ll build the hospital. Good...good”. The scene then shifts to the scene of the community hard at work building a new hospital. As the scene fades out, a voiceover tells us that “Our community did work together and build a hospital with free services. Maybe we started something...” (Heritage Project, 1998).

It should come as no surprise that the narrative movement of this Minute strongly echoes that of “Baldwin and Lafontaine”, “Nitro” and others we have seen. In this Minute, the tragic death of the child sets the scene but it is emplotted as a whole on comic lines. We see how the town hall meeting begins in cacophony and ends in harmony as the representatives of various nationalities learn to put aside their historical antipathies and work together for the common good in their new country. By embracing the Canadian genius for compromise, cultural differences dissolve. It would even appear from the Minute that the genius for compromise comes equipped with a universal translator that allows town meetings to proceed in four different languages without a hitch. In working together, this Minute concludes, ‘new Canadians’ sowed the seeds of an institution that, along with the CPR, is dear to the Canadian nationalist heart: universal health care. In so

doing, potentially discordant threads are sutured back into the Canadian national narrative by making their actions symbolic of a greater national movement towards 'autonomy and maturity'.

The Heritage Minutes as Utopia

To this point, my reading of the Minutes has been critical and even satirical. However, I do believe that many of the events commemorated by the Minutes are eminently worthy of celebration. "Myrnam Hospital", for example, enshrines values and norms of action that are particularly salient in a multicultural Canada and a globalized world: the willingness to overcome parochial prejudices in order to work together to protect the weak and suffering. Similarly, a Minute like "Orphans" that depicts the willingness of Québécois families to allow adopted Irish orphans to retain their last names is a powerful testament to ideals of compassion, generosity and respect for and appreciation of cultural difference while "Hart and Papineau" or "Jackie Robinson" extol the rights of the individual and the need to secure her freedom from illegitimate societal constraints. Finally, Minutes like "Baldwin and Lafontaine" venerate things like mutual understanding, compromise and intercultural dialogue as a better way to achieve desired social and political ends than violence. In other words, the Minutes celebrate the twin pillars of western moral thought: the principle of justice which postulates equal rights and equal respect for the individual and the principle of community that asserts the need for empathy and concern for the well-being of one's neighbour (Habermas, 1990: 200).

One of the most interesting things about nostalgia is that it acts as an historical inversion of the present. That is to say, nostalgia often constructs the past as a repository

of values and identities that have trouble finding expression in the present. We see this dynamic at work in the celebration of justice and community in the Minutes. In a present in which young people are encouraged to see themselves primarily as consumers in a global marketplace and to prize learning the 'practical skills' and 'hard information' required for their full participation in the global economy over the rhetorical and hermeneutic skills and 'cultural knowledge' required for full participation in the political process, these Minutes seek to remind them that they are also citizens with rights worth defending and members of a political community to whom they are responsible. Similarly, in a present in which the end of the Cold War did not eventuate in the 'end of history' but in a bloody reassertion of ethnic nationalism and religious fundamentalism worldwide, their emphasis upon anti-racism, mutual understanding, communication and compromise should not be gainsaid. In celebrating such values and identities, I would suggest that the Heritage Minutes have the potential to provide Canada's youth with important models of how to fashion themselves in a globalized and multiethnic state.

But while I agree that these prescribed identities and values are preferable to the consumerist or the rabid nationalist/fundamentalist options, I remain concerned by the attempt in these Minutes to "Canadianize" such values and identities. As we have seen, the Minutes typically seek to bring to light Canada's genius for compromise, its tolerant character, its communitarian tendencies and so on through a favorable comparison either with the American 'Other' or the discarded dross of the political and cultural traditions that it inherited from Europe. In other words, every celebration of Canadian

'inclusiveness' is accompanied by a reassertion of cultural boundaries and the production of a degraded 'Other'.

As Michael Ignatieff points out in a debate with Jack Granatstein over the question of "Does History Matter?", this seeming contradiction becomes even more striking in the light of the fact that allegedly "made in Canada" cultural and political values such as "civic courage", "neighbourliness" and "a willingness to argue out our differences instead of reaching for a gun; a belief that everybody should stand on their own two feet, coupled with a view that those who genuinely can't are entitled to some help" are not exclusively or even originally Canadian property but that "most Western liberal democracies would have much the same common ground" (Ignatieff, 2002: 1-2). Seen in this light, therefore, those virtues that the Minutes seek to nationalize as exclusively Canadian are really the civic virtues that have traditionally acted as the blueprint for successful citizenship in the West as a whole and the product of a 'multinational' dialogue whose roots can be traced back to Plato and Christ.

Furthermore, it could be argued that if these civic virtues were pushed to their logical endpoints, they would end up undoing the Canada constructed by the Minutes. For example, as I have argued, the Minutes are concerned, among other things, with the reconstruction of cultural boundaries between Canada and the United States. This has been done, I have argued, by stereotyping Americans as racist, violent, greedy and so on. Like all stereotypes, this characterization of the Americans works to reaffirm boundaries only as long as young Canadians close themselves off to the American historical experience. There are two problems with this. First of all, as Canadian cultural nationalists

continuously lament, Canada's mediascape has long been inundated by American culture. Secondly, as trade, political, military and cultural links between the two nations multiply, many of the virtues celebrated by these Minutes will have the effect of further 'opening' Canadians to the American experience. As Minutes like "Myrnam Hospital" argue, for members of different cultures to work together effectively, it is often necessary for them to suspend, if not reject, parts of their inherited tradition in order to arrive at some sort of mutual understanding and agreement. As Jack Granatstein argues, the Loyalist anti-Americanism upon which the Minutes version of Canada is based seems to be the main aspect of the Canadian tradition that has been rejected in recent years as a result of increased cross-border contact. This would seem to support Jurgen Habermas' argument that, when pushed to their logical limits, the instantiation of the communicative virtues of openness, respect for others, compassion and generosity have the effect of emancipating interactions from 'parochial conventions' and thus "lose the vigorous historical coloration of a particular form of life" (Habermas, 1990: 161). In other words, Habermas is suggesting that if the utopian possibilities at the root of the Heritage Minutes were fully realized, their parochial construction of Canada might be one of the first things to go.

Chapter 7: The Narrative of Overcoming

In the Canadian grand narrative, the narrative of reconciliation is accompanied by another: the narrative of overcoming. In this narrative, the hero overcomes some sort of obstacle on his or her road to greater knowledge, power, freedom and so on. As the vocabulary of ‘overcoming obstacles’ suggests, unimpeded movement in space becomes a metaphor in this narrative for social, economic and political progress. In relentlessly ‘pushing back the frontiers’, the hero of the narrative of overcoming leads her community ‘onwards and upwards’. The frontier is thus much more than a spatial boundary—it is also a temporal boundary demarcating the ‘cutting edge’ of the civilizing process. In conquering the ‘difference’, resistance and opacity of the spatio-temporal frontier, this narrative asserts, our present moves ever closer to a future of universal peace, prosperity, harmony and justice.

In the Heritage Minutes, the celebration of the pushing back of frontiers occurs in the spheres of nature, society and art. In this chapter, I will examine the manner in which the Minutes narrate Canadian history as a process of overcoming limits to physical movement, political and social mobility and individual expression. As was the case in the examination of the narrative of reconciliation, I will, in the spirit of Freud, Macherey and Lowenthal, also inquire what gets edited out of this celebration of overcoming and revised in order to accomplish the ideological program of the Heritage Minutes. I will begin by looking at how the Heritage Minutes draw upon and revise the ‘technological nationalist’ narrative of Canada as a product of communication and transportation technologies. I will then examine and critique how this adaptation of the core myths of technological

nationalism in turn affects how the process of overcoming in the socio-political and cultural realms is figured in the Heritage Minutes.

Overcoming and the Rhetoric of Discovery

The equation of social and intellectual progress with movement through space that we saw above explains why the figure of the explorer and the rhetoric of 'discovery' occupy central positions in the modern imagination. As Tzvetan Todorov argues in The Conquest of America (1984), it has become a commonplace to argue that no date is more suitable to mark "the beginning of the modern era, than the year 1492, the year Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean. We are all direct descendants of Columbus, it is with him that our genealogy begins" (Todorov, 1984: 5). As is commonly asserted, in daring to sail west of the Canary Islands, Columbus left behind the 'wisdom of the ancients' that the world was flat and that what is now called 'the Old World' constituted the entirety of the world's land mass. Instead he chose to rely upon his powers of empirical observation and mathematical calculation in order to 'boldly go where no man had gone before'. In so doing, he 'discovered' a 'New World'. This act of discovery, it was believed, had three main providential effects. First of all, it gave the emerging European nation-states access to new sources of wealth that would stimulate the development of mercantile and industrial capitalism in Europe. Secondly, it gave the previously 'benighted' peoples of these newly discovered lands access to the civilizing bounties of the Christian West. Finally, it stimulated the rejection of established and traditional ideas and the quest for 'the new' in the areas of the arts, the sciences, politics and 'lifestyle'. As Todorov explains, it is

with Columbus's discoveries that the verb 'to discover' takes an intransitive character and becomes an end unto itself.

In acts of discovery, therefore, the individual's quest shades into a social utopia. While this utopia had a distinctly Christian character in the early decades of exploration, the utopia celebrated by the rhetoric of discovery increasingly followed modernity's faith in the power of human reason and, more specifically, of empirical science to facilitate humanity's ability to predict and control the natural (and later social) world. The increased capacity for prediction and control, the discourse of 'modernity' held, would progressively realize a utopia of peace, rationality, material prosperity, and human domination over nature. Within this discourse, the chief obstacle to the realization of such a utopia were those groups who continue to cherish and defend 'superstitious' or 'bigoted' cultural traditions based on sacred texts or myths. Once they are defeated, it held, the Christian view that history would come to an end with the Second Coming gives way to the grand narrative of humanity's infinite progress towards knowledge, control of its environment, material prosperity, social harmony and artistic creativity. In this way, the questioning of tradition and the celebration of progress, innovation and discovery for its own sake thus became central values in Western modernity.

The White 'Discovery' of Canada

If, as Todorov suggests, the narrative of modernity begins not with an act of founding and/or creation but with an act of discovery, it should come as no surprise that narratives of discovery occupy a prominent place in Heritage Project's early history of Canadian modernity. However, the chronologically 'first' of the Minutes is one that we

have already seen—"Peacemaker". As will be recalled, this Minute was a retelling of the Iroquois legend of Hiawatha. What is significant about this Minute is that it situates Hiawatha's coming as occurring in the undated past and an undefined location. As I argued in the previous chapter, this is consistent with what Fabian calls 'the denial of coevalness' in that it suggests that native society was essentially static and ahistorical, an eternal repetition of the Same. In the words of Daniel Francis, the narrative of overcoming has as one of its hidden presuppositions the belief that "History was something that happened to white people" (Francis, 1997: 72).

In the chronologically next two Minutes, the validity of Francis' dictum is confirmed. "Vikings" begins with a caption which locates the action at a specific time and date—980 A.D. in Newfoundland—and tells us that we are watching a native attack on a Viking settlement. We watch as the natives (represented in this Minute only as the point of a spear) drive the Vikings back into their boats and back to Greenland. The scene then shifts to 1961 where we watch two archaeologists at work excavating the settlement the Vikings left behind. As the Minute draws to a close, a voice-over tells that "the Vikings were, by centuries, the first Europeans to visit this continent" (Heritage Project, 1998).

This Minute provides us with a very specific date and place for the represented actions. In other words, the Vikings, as the 'cutting edge' of European civilization, represented the first intrusion of history and progress on North America soil. The second thing we should notice is the fact that their assailants, whose faces we never see, are identified by the caption as generic 'natives'. To refer to "Peacemaker", it is more than likely that one of the reasons why they are represented in this generic manner and,

furthermore, that the Vikings are not just identified as 'whites' or 'Europeans' is that these Minutes view the native people as sharing some sort of a static, timeless and essential 'nativeness'. The Vikings, however, must be clearly differentiated from other European groups and Scandinavians of other eras because they, like all western and northern Europeans, are dynamic products of history. Another possible reason for the use of the generic term 'native' is that the assailants more than likely would have been Beothuk. By specifying their tribal allegiances, this Minute might become an unpleasant reminder of the genocide of the Beothuk at the hands of the white settlers of Newfoundland. The final point to attend to is the fact that this Minute identifies the beginning of history with an act of discovery. As we have seen, acts of discovery take on foundational roles in narrative of overcoming. While this Minute details an event inconsequential for the development of subsequent Canadian history, this only serves to further highlight the power of the rhetoric of discovery in the historiography of Canada.

It also seems to highlight the power of 'whiteness' in the Heritage Minutes. In spite of the fact that it was an historical non-starter, it more than likely could be argued that the settlement at Vinland was worthy of commemoration because it marked the origins of the European presence on Canadian soil. In the usual manner of telling the story, the Vikings were thus the avant-garde who led the way for future English and French exploration and settlement of Canada under the aegis of adventurers like Cabot, Cartier, Champlain and Hudson.

What is peculiarly absent from such a version of the story is the fact that three other European "nations" established a strong presence each summer in the Canadian cod

and whale fishery from the late 15th century onwards—the Portuguese, the Spanish and the Basques. By 1560, for example, the Basques had established at least nine large “factory-like processing facilities” for the production of whale oil on the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador and initiated the St. Lawrence fur trade (Taylor & Baskerville, 1994). Furthermore, the second colony set up on Canadian soil was not Cartier’s aborted settlement around Quebec city in 1541 but the one set up by the Portuguese on what is believed to be Cape Breton Island in 1520 (Innis, 1940; Francis et al., 1998: 23). While this colony would suffer a similar fate to that of Vinland and the Spanish, Basque and Portuguese presence would be substantially diminished by the 17th century, their mariners and entrepreneurs played a vital role in the creation of a trans-Atlantic economic network and laid the groundwork for the subsequent discoveries of Cartier, Champlain and others.

However, their contributions are rarely even mentioned in the Canadian grand narrative. The most obvious explanation for this would be that they left no lasting contribution to the development of the Canadian nation-state. However, neither did the Vikings but their presence is often celebrated. What then, is the difference between the Vikings and the Basques or the Portuguese? Again, the obvious answer is that the Vikings are more important because they were the first to discover Canada and the latter just followed. While I have no problem accepting that the priority of the Vikings’ discovery endows them with an historical prestige that the others perhaps cannot claim, it still does not seem to be enough to justify the near exclusion of the Iberian peoples from the Canadian grand narrative.

As writers like Eva Mackey, Daniel Francis and Richard Dyer might argue, one of the reasons why the Vikings are drawn into the Canadian 'family history' and the others are not, has to do with the traditional relationship between race and Canadian nationalism. As Mackey argues, since the 19th century, English-Canadian nationalism has been 'icy white'. By this she means that this nationalism inherited from 19th century racial thought the belief that peoples who developed in northern climes were inherently superior to those in warmer climates. As Richard Dyer explains in *White* (1997), it was believed that such climes "had a number of virtues: the clarity and cleanliness of the air, the vigour demanded by the cold, the enterprise required by the harshness of the terrain and the climate, the sublime, soul-elevating beauty of mountain vistas, even the greater nearness to God and the presence of the whitest thing on earth, snow." Such an environment, Dyer explains, "could be seen to have formed the white character, its energy, enterprise, discipline and spiritual elevation" (Dyer, 1997: 19). As Mackey argues, in contradistinction to the energizing and elevating properties of the north which led its inhabitants to strive for political freedom, commercial success, moral autonomy and knowledge, the warmer south bred sloth, decay, effeminacy, libertinism and disease and encouraged the acceptance of tyranny, poverty, servitude and ignorance.

As Mackey argues, this assertion of the 'northernness' of Canada and its peoples was traditionally used to assert Canada's historical destiny as "a pre-eminent power because of its superior racial characteristics" (Mackey, 1999: 30). This would seem to help to explain why Canadian nationalist histories have been so quick to claim the Vikings as progenitors and to marginalize the sustained presence of the Spanish, Portuguese and

Basques: the Vikings represent perhaps the epitome of 'northernness' and 'whiteness' while the Iberian peoples are too 'southern' to fit comfortably within the grand narrative.

Another related reason for their exclusion stems from the generic codes of 'national history'. The main characters of national histories are typically those who contributed to the creation and development of what Edward Whiting Fox called "the territorial-administrative state". This is a political order that claims and defends its sovereignty over a bounded space, in which entities such as the 'national economy' and 'the population' become subjects of centralized regulation, in which the interaction between people are coordinated through a combination of rigidly enforced set of laws and a life-long process of cultural and pedagogical 'subjectification' and so on. In History in Geographic Perspective: the Other France (1971), Fox argues that in parallel to this type of political order, another has developed. This 'other' order is what he calls 'the commercial society'. Unlike the 'territorial-administrative state' whose power depended upon its ability to defend its border and police the activities of those within its borders, the commercial society has no territorial extension. It is rather a series of nodes in a fluid network of ports, trade routes and markets through which goods, messages and people constantly flow.

As Brenda LaFleur argues, this 'networked' society based on constant movement has always been experienced as a threat by the architects of the territorial-administrative state. In the forging of a Canadian territorial state, she writes, "The land and its attendant notion of progress being a conquering and settling of the land was an important ideological vehicle in this project. It is an idea which requires, like all hierarchical binaries,

the violent exclusion of the second term, in this case the non-fixed, the non-unified, the unstable” (LaFleur, 1996: 132). Following Fox and LaFleur, we can surmise that it was because they were considered to be ‘nomadic’ or ‘non-fixed’ members of the commercial society who only came to Canada to fish and trade before returning to Europe to trade that the Iberians were excluded from the national grand narrative of settling the land and establishing a state.

Such exclusions are increasingly problematic in a world in which, as Pico Iyer puts it, “more and more people are on the move and motion itself has become a kind of nation” (Iyer, 2002:77). According to Iyer, in contemporary Canada’s major cities, the relative homogeneity and stability of the national ‘ethnoscape’ (to borrow a term for Arjun Appadurai) is giving way to a fluid, ‘post-national fusion’. These cities are coming to resemble less permanent ‘settlements’ than ‘in-between spaces’ like ‘oases’, ‘market’ or ‘caravansaries’ in which people come together from all across the globe to continuously recombine “shattered pieces to make a stained-glass whole” (Iyer, 2002: 79). This emergent ‘oasis society’, however, is looked upon with suspicion and even malice by those who occupy the suburbs and rural areas that ring these ‘in-between’ spaces. Such spaces, he writes, are “still locked inside a nineteenth-century, decidedly monocultural past” (Iyer, 2002: 78). As Rinaldo Walcott argues in “Lament for a Nation: the Racial Geography of the Oh! Canada Project”, the white and primarily Anglo group who typically inhabit those spaces tends to view contemporary Canada through a distinctly nostalgic lens. It dreams, he writes, of reviving “the romance of the unified nation-state and the lie of national sameness” (Walcott, 1996: 5) but finds that it can only do so if it reasserts the

identification of 'Canadian' with 'settler' and this reassertion requires, above all, the silencing of the voices of those racial 'Others' who claim a more flexible relationship to Canadian national boundaries. In other words, in the same way that the authors of the grand narrative exclude the Basques, Portuguese and Spanish from the Canadian genealogy on the basis of their 'nomadicism', Somalis, Pakistanis, Lebanese and other groups are denied full 'Canadianness' by self-identified 'real Canadians' or 'unhyphenated Canadians' on the basis of their mobility and multinational affiliations. Since many of these 'Others' will not necessarily remain in Canada, their stories are simply written out of Canadian nationalist histories.

Irony and the Neutralization of Utopian Thinking

In the chronologically next Minute titled "Cabot", the equation of whiteness with the beginnings of historical dynamism on Canadian shores recurs again. This one, its captions tell us, is set on a ship at night off the coast of Newfoundland in 1497. It begins with a sailor running into the captain's cabin and shouting "John Cabot, you won't believe your eyes!". Cabot then emerges from his cabin and makes his way to the ship's gunwales where his crew is gathered. The camera follows their gaze down to the water which is teeming with cod. The scene then shifts to the court of Henry VII in London where Cabot speaks to the king and his retainers. He tells them that off the coast of Newfoundland, he discovered "Codfish so thick they stayed the progress of our ship..." He then tells them that this discovery would free them of their dependence on the Icelandic cod fishery (over which the English and the Hanseatic League had fought several wars in the late 15th

century) because Newfoundland contained “Fishes enough to feed this kingdom , oh sire, until the end of time” (Heritage Project, 1998).

In this Minute, the narrative of discovery is faithfully followed. Cabot, like Columbus, launches his ship into dangerous and uncharted waters in defiance of established wisdom. For his Promethean act of bravery, his name is still remembered and celebrated more than half a millennium later. Furthermore, his actions do not just benefit him but the society (in this case, England) as a whole. As a result of his discovery of this plentiful new land, England will rid itself of its dependency on an external markets for food. Furthermore, this progress towards increased autonomy and prosperity will be accompanied by a progress towards peace—since they no longer need to rely upon the Iceland fishery, the possibility of conflict with the Hanseatic League is greatly reduced. The act of discovery, in other words, seems to be an unmitigated ‘good’ for all.

However, Cabot’s final words seem to disrupt this narrative’s movement towards a state of infinite progress. As will be recalled, it ended with the words “Fishes enough to feed this kingdom...until the end of time”. Furthermore, Cabot is shown to be crossing himself as he speaks these words. For the contemporary viewer of this Minute, there is a bitter irony in these words and an unspoken prescience in Cabot’s gestures. While the cod fishery did feed Europe’s poor and middle classes for four centuries, cod stocks quickly diminished in the 20th century as a result of the rapid development of fishing technologies to the point that the Canadian government had to shut down the fishery in 1992 in hopes of saving the few cod left. A decade later, the fishery still shows little sign of recovery. In this case, it would seem that the West’s utopian dreams of infinite material and social

progress through the development of ever more efficient ways of dominating nature has turned into a nightmare.

What is interesting here is that “Cabot” introduces a critical awareness of this ecological catastrophe into its text by setting up a contrast between what Cabot believed then and what we know now. As we have seen, the Minute detailing Cartier’s encounter with Donnacona also placed the viewer in a position of epistemic superiority to the explorer and we see this again in another Minute that deals with the theme of exploration and discovery: “Nicollet”. This Minute begins indoors with a closeup of Jean Nicollet telling Samuel de Champlain that “when I finish paddling through this wilderness and reach them, I shall greet them wearing this” and holds up a red silk robe with a Chinese dragon embroidered on it. The scene then shifts outdoors as we watch Nicollet and a group of natives and young Frenchmen paddle off in a flotilla of canoes. As we follow their progress westward, a voiceover tells us that “In the summer of 1634, Jean Nicollet set off from Quebec to find a trade route that would link Europe and North America with China.”. Finally, during a portage, they reach a promontory where a native guide shouts: “Oja! Mississippi!”. Nicollet’s interpreter then tells him that this latter word means “Great Water”. The scene ends with Nicollet looking triumphantly over a large body of water and saying “The sea to China”. As the scene fades, a voice over comes on and tells us “Jean Nicollet was wrong. It was Lake Michigan and not the Pacific, but others would follow his dream—Joliette, LaSalle, the LaVerendryes—and they would map most of North America from the Rockies to the Gulf of Mexico” (Heritage Project, 1998).

Given that three of the five Minutes that deal with the early exploration of Canada are constructed in a manner that reveals what we now recognize as ‘delusional thinking’ on the part of the main protagonist, we must ask why this occurs. As I have argued in the case of Cartier, one reason is that these Minutes are constructed in order to flatter the audience by suggesting how much more clever we are now than those heroic but deluded souls. Furthermore, we can push this line of reasoning further. In presenting these explorers as somehow deluded and us as more knowing, the Minutes seek to reaffirm the myth of progress. As Kuhn writes in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, the traditional view of scientific progress portrays it as a “piecemeal process by which these items [facts, theories and methods] have been added, singly and in combination, to the ever growing stockpile that constitutes scientific technique and knowledge” (Kuhn, 1970: 1-2). Given these basic assumptions, Kuhn argues, whenever we narrate the history of scientific knowledge, we focus on two things: acts of discovery and “the congeries of error, myth, and superstition that have inhibited the more rapid accumulation of the constituents of the modern science texts” (ibid.).

It is in the “Nicollet” Minute that these traditional *topoi* of the narrative of scientific progress play the most obvious structuring role. Throughout the Minute, we watch as Nicollet ignores all evidence to the contrary and persists in the delusion that he has discovered the Pacific and China. However, we also learn that, in spite of his deluded state, he still opened up a rich new field of exploration and that his discovery would be added on and refined in subsequent decades by other explorers to the point that in the contemporary world, there is no *terra incognita* left on Canadian soil. We are thus heirs to

Nicollet's insights but not his delusions. A similar dynamic is also at work in "Cabot" and "Cartier". In both of these Minutes, discovery can be recognized as commingling with error only from the vantage point of an 'enlightened' contemporary Canada in which insights have progressively accumulated and errors, myths and superstitions have been sloughed off.

In this figuration of intellectual progress as a piecemeal and cumulative process, these Minutes mirror the narrative of political progress that we saw in the previous chapter. There, narratives of reconciliation and redemption like "Nitro", "Étienne Parent" and "Hart and Papineau" figure Canada's political history as a process by which the parochial prejudices of Canada's various cultural groups are left behind and are joined in an increasingly just and inclusive political order. Furthermore, they are careful to suggest, in much the same way as traditional narratives of scientific progress, that this occurs by a cumulative process of reform and not by sudden and violent revolution. In this manner, the present political, social and intellectual order comes to be valorized as the best of all possible worlds because its kinks have been worked out by a long process of trial and error.

In pairing past instances of discovery with instances of delusion, the revolutionary insights of the past come to play a counter-revolutionary role in the present. This is because the Minutes are intended to play an exemplary role for young Canadians by reassuring them, to paraphrase Eliade, that it can be done because it has been done. While Eliade would no doubt stress the hortatory role of these Minutes in encouraging young Canadians to dare to 'innovate', they are also cautionary *exempla*. In all of these three

Minutes, we see how utopias of unbridled consumption (Cabot), unbridled riches (Nicollet) or unbridled knowledge (the priest in “Cartier”) lead their protagonists to error. Therefore, these three Minutes do not just seek to prop up a cumulativist vision of progress that enshrines the present as the best of all possible worlds, but to caution young Canadians against ‘getting carried away’ in their imagining of a better world. Such utopian desires, they tell us, at best, will open you to ridicule and, at worst, will undo the patient work of generations that has its culmination in the present social order. In this way, irony seems to be called upon to neutralize utopian longings.

The Romance of Settlement

As Brenda LaFleur has argued, if in the romance of Canadian progress, the discovery of the new land was the opening scene, its subjugation and settlement constituted its middle scenes. This narrative of progress typically followed the narrative sequence of the romance—hero sets out on a quest, encounters a seemingly insuperable obstacle but by mustering the virtues of courage, determination, wile and strength, she overcomes that obstacle that hindered her and her community’s development. Given the emplotment of the processes of discovery and settlement as a romantic quest, it should come as no surprise that for the first three or so centuries of the history of what we now call ‘Canada’, European colonizers looked upon the land with a decidedly ambivalent eye.

For many who arrived from Europe, this ‘new land’ was a ‘desert’ that was barren of those things that gave the world form, meaning and order—kings, soldiers, priests, forts, cities, plowed fields, roads, churches and so on. Instead, they felt as though they were thrown into an impassive and uncommunicative wilderness in which the opacity of

the forest, the distances separating them from 'home' and cultural difference would, like Jonah's whale or Beowulf's Grendel, engulf them and all that they regarded as 'civilized' entirely. In 1744, for example, the Jesuit Pierre de Charlevoix lamented that

I am sent into a country, where I shall often be obliged to travel a hundred leagues and upwards, without so much as meeting with one human creature, or indeed anything else but one continued prospect of rivers, lakes, woods and mountains. And besides, what sort of men shall I meet with? With savages, whose language I do not understand, and who are equally unacquainted with mine. Besides, what can men, who live in the most barbarous ignorance, say to me, that can affect me; or what can I say to them, who are full as indifferent and unconcerned as to what passes in Europe, and as little affected by it, as you and I Madam, with what relates to their private concerns (Charlevoix, 1967: 62).

Charlevoix's sense of being swallowed by an opaque and threatening new land was voiced over and over again by European visitors during the first four centuries of the European exploration and settlement of that land. As writers like Northrop Frye (1971), Margaret Atwood (1972) and Gail McGregor (1985) have argued, European colonizers in this period were haunted by a sense that the land in which they had settled was not the sublime and picturesque entity that populated European landscape paintings, the 'nourishing motherland' or the 'Garden of Eden' but rather an unpredictable, disordered, impassive, dangerous and even hostile entity whose two outstanding attributes were the harshness of the winter and the ubiquity of stinging insects. In spite of mosquitoes and winters, what was even more threatening to the colonizers, as Charlevoix alludes, was the fact that the Canadian wilderness, in all of its immensity, intractability and inscrutability, represented the negation of European modernity's burgeoning faith that the human mind could know and order the world. As Northrop Frye observes: "The human mind has nothing but human and moral values to cling to if it is to preserve its integrity or even its

sanity, yet the vast unconsciousness of nature in front of it seems an unanswerable denial of those values" (Frye, 1971: 225).

In his conclusion to The Literary History of Canada (1971), Frye famously argued that this sense of nature as a hostile presence that threatened to undo all of the colonizer's civilizing projects led to the development of what he calls a 'garrison mentality' in Canadian culture. In the face of an impassive and foreboding landscape, he argues, settlers band together in 'outposts of civilization'. As we have already seen in our discussion of both the English-Canadian reaction to the Lester affair and our discussion of Loyalism, sociability in these garrison communities is characterized above all by a strict assertion of the fundamental importance of communal 'unity' in the face of external threats and by a great respect for the institutions of 'law and order' that hold them together. In such a society, he writes, "its moral and social values are unquestionable. In a perilous enterprise one does not discuss causes or motives: one is either a fighter or a deserter" (Frye, 1971: 226). In spite of the fact that it secures unity by constantly constructing the community as beleaguered by an external 'Other', the greatest terror in such a community is not caused by the 'Other' but by the experience of individuation, of moving from an externally imposed identity to a sense of one's own autonomy. In order to alleviate Canadians of that terror, Frye writes, the Canadian garrison culture encourages the development of "a dominating herd-mind in which nothing original can grow" (ibid.).

In The Wacousta Syndrome (1985), Gail McGregor concurs with Frye's argument that the condition of settling in a harsh climate fosters a sense of the Canadian social order as being under constant threat, she rejects his rather sneering Nietzschean dismissal of the

Canadian 'herd-mentality'. Instead, she argues that it has given Canadian culture a pro-social bent which distinguishes it from American culture. The constant awareness of the threatening and 'untamable' nature of the Canadian wilderness, she argues, acts to provide Canadians with a clear sense of the limits to human agency. In their settlement of what she calls 'the northern frontier', she writes, "Canadians have had it drummed into them that even if they *could* achieve the kind of escape from social connection and constraint that the American westering myth implies, they would be foolish to do so. Co-operative effort is the only way one can survive, let alone thrive, in an environment like ours" (McGregor, 1985: 46). Along with this emphasis on cooperation, she argues, comes an emphasis on compromise, accommodation and, above all, collective security. The need to cooperate in order to survive in a harsh climate has typically cashed out in subsuming individual difference to communal identity in order to prevent the development of rifts that might threaten the community's ability to protect itself from external threats.

According to Margaret Atwood, the result of the figuration of nature as a threat was that the colonizers' relation to it was characterized primarily by military metaphors: "man could fight and lose, or he could fight and win. If he won he would be rewarded: he could conquer and enslave Nature, and, in practical terms, exploit her resources" (Atwood, 1972: 60). According to Atwood, the two main heroes in this romance of the battle to subjugate Canadian Nature were the explorer and the settler. As we have already seen, explorers were given the jobs of reconnoitering the land. Having reduced its opacity, they then step aside in the grand narrative for our next hero: the settler. As Atwood explains, this involves, above all, the imposition of order in the form straight lines and

grids where chaos and serpentine lines had previously reigned. Once its power was harnessed, the Canadian land would be the most prosperous and beautiful one on earth.

We can see this temporal shift in the colonizers' imagination from nature as a present danger but a future source of prosperity in the Minutes that deal directly with the question of settling 'the land'. The first is one that we have already seen: "Maple Syrup". In many ways, this Minute embodies all of the cultural tendencies described above. As will be recalled, it is set in late winter and details a native family showing a French-Canadian family how to draw sap from maple tree trunks and how to transform that sap into maple syrup and maple sugar. This Minute then ends with a scene of a French woman writing to France to report how this freely-shared knowledge had been used to create a highly productive maple sugar industry. All of the elements discussed above are thus present: a harsh winter landscape, the setting aside of cultural differences in order to show a neighboring family how to secure a new source of food at a time when food is far from plentiful and the salubrious results that ensue. As argued in the previous chapter, the narrative thus redescribes the colonization of aboriginal lands as a serene and consensual transfer of property and knowledge. Furthermore, its ending suggests that once the means of bending this harsh climate to its favour is secured by the community, the land is transformed from a threat to a source of prosperity.

The Minute "Saguenay Fire" continues the theme of the harshness of the Canadian landscape and the need for communal protection against Nature. Set on a pioneer farm in the Saguenay in May 1870, it begins with the sight of a fire burning in the distance. We then watch as the family who owns the farm scrambles to free the livestock from their

barns and then flees on horseback towards the river. They take shelter in the river by holding on to a log as the fire burns everything (including their farm) in its path. As the scene fades out, a voice over tells us that “In May 1870, fires raged along the Saguenay river for more than 150 kilometers, destroying lands and lives. One family survived by dousing themselves all right against the searing heat. One family, among the thousands, whose resourcefulness and courage shaped the character of this land” (Heritage Project, 1998).

Three things are noteworthy here. First of all, there is the figuration of nature. The Minute fits perfectly with the manner in which the Canadian imagination has traditionally figured Canadian nature as capable of suddenly shattering all human attempts to impose order upon the world. In this case, in reducing the landscape to a field of charred stumps and ashes, the Saguenay Fires literally erases any signs of the human presence from the landscape. Secondly, there is the representation of the defense against Nature’s all-consuming power as being a communal rather than an individual effort—all of the family members work together in order to ensure their collective safety.

What is most interesting, however, is the concluding voice-over. In essence, it celebrates the ‘courage and resourcefulness’ of the family merely for their ability to survive. While McGregor might analyze this conclusion as proof of the sense of limits imposed on Canadians by our environment—sometimes, just surviving is the best that we can expect—Margaret Atwood would suggest otherwise. In *Survival* (1972), she argues that this celebration of the mere act of survival is the closest thing Canada has to a central organizing myth. The cultural effect of this myth, she argues, is to foster a persistent sense

of victimhood and a colonial need to import from the metropole exemplary heroic narratives because all of ours “are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who made it back from the awful experience...that killed everybody else. The survivor has no triumph or victory but the fact of his survival” (Atwood, 1972: 33).

However, Atwood does note that while the narrative of the victim remains the core Canadian story in novel; set before the late 19th century, she finds that stories set after that time begin to invert the aggressor/victim dichotomy. She writes that “Instead of giant Nature beating up weak helpless man, we get giant man beating up weak helpless Nature” (Atwood, 1972: 63). We see the beginnings of this inversion in two Minutes titled “Soddies” and “Midwife”. The former begins with the scene of a couple of generically ‘European’ (according to the voice over) immigrants arriving with a wagon load of household items in an open field. We then watch as they play out the Lockean drama of transforming a *tabula rasa* (the fact that they were not ‘virgin lands’ but native homelands is not, of course, ever mentioned) into their property by, to paraphrase Locke, subduing, tilling and sowing the ground. Furthermore, we watch as they heap the clods of sod dug up by their plow to form the walls of the sod huts that would shelter them from the bitter winds of the Prairie winter. In this manner, they doubly overcome Nature’s entropic powers: they turn her grass prairies into wheat fields and they use her own ‘skin’ (the sod) to warm themselves against her excessive cold. Furthermore, the Minute concludes in a manner that leads no doubt as to who would ultimately win this battle of wills. In the final scene, the wife reports to the husband that “Mrs. Kovacs, she has tar paper on her roof.” The husband then replies: “One day, we will have tar paper also” (Heritage Project, 1998).

In "Midwife", on the other hand, nature primarily takes the form of an obstacle.

We watch as a horse-drawn sled races across a frozen lake carrying a young girl and an older woman. As they discuss the imminent birth of the young girl's sibling, their path is blocked by a fallen tree. When the young girl says in a panicked voice: "Oh my God! We'll never get there.", the older woman reassures her that they will arrive in time. The scene then shifts and we watch as they overcome fatigue to battle their way across the landscape by snowshoe. The last scene ends inside the family cabin with the older woman (now identified as a midwife) overseeing the successful birth of a baby (Heritage Project, 1998).

In this Minute, the Canadian landscape acts, above all, as an impediment to communication and communal assistance because of the extended space between the midwife and the family cabin, the resistance that the snow offers to those who seek to move over it and the obstacles that it places in the traveler's path. However, unlike "Saguenay Fire", this is not a story of mere survival but one of overcoming. In spite of the obstacles placed in their way, the midwife and the young woman reach the cabin in time to assist in the literal reproduction and extension of the human order in this resistant space.

The Rhetoric of Technological Nationalism

The theme of bringing people together and extending the human presence over the land by the overcoming of space plays out over and over again in these Minutes. While "Midwife" celebrated the use of two fairly 'low-tech' means of traversing space, many other Minutes would celebrate the development of increasingly powerful space-binding technologies. "Sanford Fleming", for example, is set during the building of the intercolonial railway in 1869 and begins with a scene of a casually dressed man (later

identified as Sanford Fleming) talking enthusiastically with two dour-looking men in suits. Seemingly oblivious to their mutterings about expenses, he tells them in an expansive voice that the best materials should be used to build this railroad because “We are not just building a railroad, gentlemen, we are building a country”. As he speaks these words, he jumps on a passing hand-driven railcart and leaves the men in suits behind. Seconds later, he jumps off and purposefully strides past workers who are laying rail ties and felling trees (all to the accompaniment of martial music) and enters a cabin. Followed by several others, he walks into the cabin, points to a map and complains about the number of different time zones across North America. As he then moves to a table to pour himself coffee (he is represented as being in constant movement), he says: “With the railway and the electric telegraph, what the world really needs is a system of standard time zones”. When a young man in the room objects that this would be resisted because “cities set their own time by the sun”, Fleming responds that “We have to make them listen, make them understand even if it takes years”. The Minute then closes with a scene of Fleming receiving an award in Washington for his invention of standard time zones (Heritage Project, 1998).

There are two main points to this Minute. First of all, there is the figuration of temporal difference as an obstacle to technological progress. Prior to the invention of the clock, the passage of time was measured according to a combination of natural rhythms, personal experience and the distinctions that a given community drew between sacred and profane time (McLuhan, 1994). In other words, temporal difference was the norm. With the invention of the clock, however, the organization of time was radically changed. The

clock broke the day up into a regular sequence of abstract and homogenous units. This permitted a geometric increase in the ability to regulate and coordinate the actions of students, workers and machines. As Jacques Ellul argues: "Mumford is right in calling the clock the most important machine in our culture. And he is right too in asserting that the clock has made modern progress and efficiency possible through its rapidity of action and the coordination it effects in man's daily activities." (Ellul, 1964: 329).

Fleming's invention of standardized time pushed the cultural dynamic set off by the invention of the clock to its logical endpoint. From the purely technical point of view of coordinating train schedules, this invention has had the generally salutary consequence of greatly reducing the number of fatal train wrecks (Beniger, 1986). However, many believe that such gains in efficiency and security did not come without a price. Neil Postman, for example, argues that the standardization of time represents the death-knell of sacred or what he calls "God's own time" in favour of a rationalized bureaucratic logic that "ignores all information and ideas that do not contribute to efficiency" (Postman, 1992: 85).

Similarly, James Beniger suggests that it played a formative role in "the leveling of times and places" (Beniger, 1986: 318) that nowadays goes by the name of 'globalization' and/or 'cultural homogenization'. Finally, writers like Lewis Mumford (1963), Martin Heidegger (1977) Jacques Ellul (1964), Harold Innis (1950) and Marshall McLuhan (1994) all suggest, in their idiosyncratic ways, that the more general process of the mechanization of time marks the triumph of technological rationality and the denaturalizing, depersonalizing and desacralizing of our experience. As Ellul laments, with the invention of the clock, "life itself was measured by the machine; its organic functions

obeyed the mechanical. Eating, working and sleeping were at the beck and call of machinery...Human life ceased to be an ensemble, a whole, and became a disconnected set of activities" (Ellul, 1964: 329).

Given the existence of these critical concerns about the 'dislocating' cultural and psychological consequences of the standardization of time, the unabashed celebration of Fleming's invention invites further reflection. More specifically, what is it about the invention of a means of facilitating the overcoming of spatial distances that allows legitimate grievances to be so easily pushed aside? The answer for this can be found, I would suggest, in the centrality of the idea of progress to the modern Canadian imaginary. As I argued in the opening pages of this chapter, since progress is always represented as a dynamic forward movement in time and space (one sees this in the representation of Fleming as hyper-kinetic), anything that hinders forward movement is figured as an obstacle that must be overcome. Otherwise, one is faced with stagnation or regression. To paraphrase Paul Virilio, anything that induces stasis is equated with death in the grand narrative of progress (Virilio, 1986). In this case of "Sanford Fleming", obstacles such as nature's rhythms, cultural diversity, a sense of the sacred and the defense of the individual's ability to organize her experience of time as she sees fit are portrayed as such a small price to pay for the increased efficiency in our ability to move forward in time and space that they do not even bear mentioning.

This brings us to the second interesting dimension of this Minute: Fleming's equation of the building of the nation with the building of the railroad. In "Technological Nationalism" (1986), Maurice Charland argues that this equation is central to what he

calls the rhetoric of Canadian technological nationalism. Such a rhetoric, he argues, figures Canada as a nation that has overcome natural obstacles to communication through the construction technologies like the CPR, the CBC, telecommunications satellites, the Internet and so on in order to ward off American annexation and local provincialism in order to create a national 'people'. As he explains:

In Canada, the constitution of a "people" of individuals united under a liberal state requires that the barriers between regions be apparently transcended. As it permits mastery over nature, technology offers the possibility of that apparent transcendence. Consequently, in order to assert a national interest and unity, Ottawa depends upon a rhetoric of technological nationalism—a rhetoric which both asserts that a technologically mediated Canadian *nation* exists, and calls for improved communication between regions to render that nation materially present. (Charland, 1986: 202).

In several more Minutes, we see technological nationalism's equation of the development of space-binding technologies with national development again and again. "Marconi" for example, celebrates Guglielmo Marconi's successful test of the first trans-Atlantic wireless telephone call from St. John's Signal Hill to England. The fact that Marconi was an Italian working for the British government for whom Canada was simply a convenient base for this experiment matters little in this Minute, the Promethean act of instantaneously spanning the Atlantic is identified as a thoroughly Canadian endeavour. Similarly, "Halifax Explosion" details dispatcher Vince Coleman's noble sacrifice for the nation as he used the telegraph to warn an oncoming train that a French munitions ship was about to explode in the Halifax harbour while "Bombardier" commemorates the career of Joseph-Armand Bombardier, the inventor of the 'Ski-Doo' and the founder of a company that builds space-binding technologies ranging from subways to airplanes.

However, two Minutes are of particular interest here because they suggest a contemporary rewriting of technological nationalism's core narrative. The first is "Thomas Eadie". In terms of both pace and content, this Minute closely resembles "Sanford Fleming". It's beginning scene is set in 1953 in Bell Canada's boardroom with a massive map of Canada on the wall and a three dimensional model of a microwave network strung out over Canadian space on a table. It begins with an enthusiastic-looking man leading a group of men in suits into the room and telling them that "Our telephone, teletype and national television from one end of the country to the other like that (he snaps his fingers). Four thousand miles of microwave links instead of tons of copper wire." Another man who was huddling with several others in the corner then turns to the speaker and tells him in an incredulous manner: "Yes, but fifty million dollars, Mr. Eadie? Oh my...". The scene then quickly shifts to what is identified as the office of J. Alphonse Ouimet, the director general of Bell Canada (and future president of the CBC). Ouimet speaks to Eadie in a warm voice and confesses to him that "They also laughed at my experimental television twenty years ago and maybe they were right but a single system for telephone and television, that's the future." He then puts his hand on Eadie's shoulder and assures him that "We're with you, Tom". With this reassurance from his boss and fellow visionary, in a series of very short scenes, we watch as Eadie confidently overcomes the skepticism and resistance of less imaginative Bell Canada executives to realize his vision. In one scene, for example, he tells another man to place a tower on the top of a mountain peak. When the other laughs and replies that only a cable car could haul the necessary equipment up the mountain, Eadie replies: "That's great! We'll build a cable car". The Minute ends with a

series of black and white photographs showing various phases of the construction of the network overlaid by two voice-overs. The first is a man's voice that tells us that Eadie would build the longest microwave network in the world in just three years while the second is a woman's voice which says "Hello! This is Montreal, how may I help you? One moment, sir, we'll transfer you to Vancouver" (Heritage Project, 1998).

In "Thomas Eadie", the technological nationalist dream of binding the nation together through the construction of space-binding technologies is reprised again. As in "Fleming", Thomas Eadie is represented as a dynamic, almost hyperactive, visionary engaged in an act of double overcoming in order to achieve his goal. The first is the land itself. The oversized map of Canada in the boardroom and the various schematic diagrams which emphasize the ruggedness of its terrain are used to emphasize the difficulty *and* the audacity of his plans. The second obstacle comes from cautious and conservative elements within Bell Canada's organizational culture. Like Fleming leaving behind the muttering accountants, Eadie also has to overcome the intellectual conservatism and the small-minded penury of his colleagues. Finally, there is one last parallel between "Fleming" and "Eadie". In both Minutes, the architects of the Canadian nation are not politicians or bureaucrats but engineers. Furthermore, when we encounter characters who might be identified as being members of either the state or the corporate bureaucracy, they always appear as impediments to the enterprising and innovative projects of the hero-engineers.

This tendency to identify the bureaucracy and especially the state bureaucracy as obstacles to progress, innovation and enterprise becomes quite pronounced in "Avro Arrow". This Minute is set in Toronto in 1953 and begins with a shot of the exterior of an

office building with the words “Avro” posted above its entrance. We watch as four men, three in suits and one in military dress, emerge from the building with one doing all the talking. In a staccato style, this man in a suit (played by the actor Dan Ackroyd) says to the others: “You know the story, when the RCAF said Mach II fighter, the British said it was impossible. The Yanks tried twice and failed, you’re dreaming. We said “Fine! We’ll build it right here in Toronto”. And now you guys, my guys, are telling me that it can’t be done, that they were right”. The scene then shifts to a series of short scenes showing the process of designing, building and testing a fighter aircraft. Finally, we watch as the finished product is wheeled out on to the tarmac four years later. As it emerges from the hangar, the gathered crowd cheers and several are shown to exclaim, independently of one another, that “We did it!”. The plane takes off into the sky and breaks the Mach II barrier. As we watch it soar majestically, the voice-over tell us that “Although the government canceled the project and destroyed the prototype, the Avro Arrow remains for Canada a world benchmark in aerospace achievement” (Heritage Project, 1998).

Like the previous two, this Minute details an act of double overcoming—the overcoming of resistant space by technological means and the overcoming of established wisdom that asserted the impossibility of this Promethean project. Furthermore, it also provides us with the pleasure of knowing that ‘we’ did what our past and present colonial overlords could not do. What is different here, however, is that the theme of the state as a hindrance to enterprise and innovation, which had been relatively latent in the previous two Minutes, becomes explicit in this Minute. Here, we watch as the Canadian ‘we’, led by our intrepid business leaders and ingenious engineers, successfully build the most

advanced fighter plane of its time, one which continues to be a world benchmark in aerospace achievement, only to have it destroyed by government fiat. The lesson of this neo-Hayekian morality play is clear: if Canada is to remain on the cutting edge of progress, the state has to step aside and let Canada's entrepreneurs and innovators take the lead for they are the true architects of the Canadian nation. In a reconfiguration of the rhetoric of technological nationalism, it is the business class that wills the nation into existence in opposition to the overbearing, verging on tyrannical, state. This marks a dramatic reversal of the rhetoric of technological nationalism. While in the original version, it was the government that heroically undertook the building of the rail and radio networks in the face of the weakness and timidity of Canada's business class, now the business class is the bold and heroic nation-builder.

The Staples Trap Again

There is a considerable historical irony in the use of the Avro Arrow incident by the Canadian corporate elite to defend its anti-statist version of technological nationalism. The incident also figured prominently in George Grant's famous autopsy of Canadian nationhood titled Lament for a Nation (1968). In that book, Grant argues that the destruction of the Arrow represented the dissolution of Canadian sovereignty and Canada's *de facto* absorption into the American empire. What is interesting about his argument in this book is the Canadian group he singles out as the main advocates of this process of Americanization: the commercial and financial elite that controls the banks, the transportation, communication and retail industries and the primary resource industries. Tacitly drawing on the ideas of Harold Innis and perhaps as well Marxist historians like

Tom Naylor, Grant argues that this 'class fraction' embraces continentalism because a closer economic relationship with the United States will recreate the 'staples trap' pattern of economic development that has proven so profitable to them in the past.

In the 'staples trap' (classically described in the essays collected in Innis (1995)), the colony exports raw materials to and imports finished goods from the metropole. For those who own things like lumber or copper companies, the benefits of this arrangement are obvious. The benefits of this constant flow of products are equally obvious for those who own the companies that deliver goods via various media and the banks for whom investment in primary extraction, real estate and the development of a transportation and communication infrastructure constitutes a much lower risk and shorter term investment than in large-scale industry. In other words, Grant argues in Lament for a Nation that this commercial and financial elite has never had any interest in developing Canadian industry and culture. It is historically only interested in finding ever more efficient ways of moving Canadian resources out of Canada and American products in. If the reader is wondering what's ironic about this, she just has to look again at the list of Historica's main corporate contributors at its founding: Royal Bank, Imasco, Bell Canada, CanWest Global, CAE inc., Toronto Dominion Bank, McClelland and Stewart, Westcoast Energy, George Weston, Maritime Broadcasting, Bank of Nova Scotia, McCain Foods, Fishery Products International and Aliant Inc.. With a few exceptions, these corporations are the flagships of the contemporary version of commercial-financial capitalist class fraction that Grant identified as the primary assassins of Canadian nationhood.

A brief look at the staples thesis also allows us to further understand why the development of space-binding technologies plays such a prominent role in the Minutes—such technologies were central to the expansion of this group's hegemonic position in the Canadian political economy. It also explains the often insipid and insubstantial character of their vision of Canada. As Charland argues, the fatal flaw in the rhetoric of technological nationalism is that the creation of technological media of communication is not the same as the creation of a common culture. This is because while such technologies facilitate the process of communication, they do not supply the content of communication. Furthermore, the existing staples pattern of North-South trade has meant that these technologies have simply acted as increasingly efficient means of distributing American cultural products across Canadian space. As Charland writes, one of the ironies of technological nationalism is that "American culture (or, what's the same, intense commodification) is imposing itself on Canada through the various technologies which should be constitutive of the Canadian experience and essence" (Charland, 1986: 213). Furthermore, even if they do not work to facilitate the proliferation of American cultural products and the hindrance of domestic production, he argues, the best that these space-binding technologies could offer to Canadians is "the empty experience of mediation. Not only do communication technologies favour centres of power and promote the suppression of marginal experience, but they transform culture into the experience of commodities and of technology itself" (Charland, 1986: 217).

The Minute "Nat Taylor" almost seems to have been written with Charland's arguments in mind. It begins with a black and white scene in the lobby of an Ottawa movie

theatre in 1957. We watch as a young couple walks up to the theatre's owner and the woman asks him "when are you going to bring in Bridge on the River Kwai? The reviews are fantastic." The owner replies that "Well, I'm still doing 50% business on Witness for the Prosecution". The young woman then responds "We saw that last week and we seem to be the only ones here to see this foreign (pronounced with a combination of disdain and apprehension) movie". The camera then shifts to a secretary standing in the background who tells the owner that Columbia Pictures is threatening to send Kwai to one of his competitors. This sets the gears rolling in the owner's mind. He thinks aloud that "wait a sec, Little Elgin is half the size of the main one, isn't it?". The scene shifts to fifteen years later where we see the owner (now filmed in color) in a boardroom with his secretary and a handful of men in suits. He recounts to them that "I moved Witness into the Little Elgin and Kwai into the big and I filled them! Then I tried a five-plex in Toronto. So I said "If I was the first to split an old moviehouse into two and two small ones into five, then what about *fifteen* houses in one?" One of the men in suits gasps and says in an incredulous voice: "*Fifteen*, man?". The owner then replies: "Not fifteen? Then how about twenty-one?" As his audience looks appropriately impressed by the boldness of his vision, an ending voice over comes on to tell us that "When Nat Taylor opened the world's biggest multiplex in Toronto, he changed the way the world goes to the movies" (Heritage Project, 1998).

This Minute is perhaps the foremost example of the contradictions of technological nationalism amongst all of the Minutes. In the opening scene, we see what can only be described as a celebration of the way in which the development of ever more efficient

ways of distributing cultural commodities favours centres of power and promotes the suppression of marginal experience. The young couple comes in demanding the latest cultural commodity produced by an American transnational corporation and are filled with dread at the prospect of seeing a 'foreign' film that represents a 'marginal experience'. Nor do they want something whose product life cycle is nearing an end. We then watch in the rest of the Minute as Taylor devises ever more bold and efficient mechanisms of delivering the latest American films to Canadian and ultimately, as the concluding voice-over tells us, the world's audiences (for more on Taylor, see Dorland, 1998).

What is especially interesting about this is that the desirability of increasing the means of distribution is left completely unquestioned in this Minute. While many have argued that the shift from single-screen to multi-screen movie theatres has greatly diminished the moviegoer's experience of film because of the latter's much smaller screen sizes, functional theatre aesthetics and so on, such qualitative questions are not even raised in this Minute. Instead, this Minute suggests that the only thing that matters is the increase in the capacity to distribute what are almost exclusively American cultural products. In other words, the more stuff you can move, the better off everyone is. Given the belief in the providential character of means of 'mediation', it should thus come as no surprise that the only intellectual or writerly achievement that is celebrated in the Minutes is McLuhan's coining of the phrase "The medium is the message".

The Land Overcome

If technological nationalism assumes that the land is something to be overcome, what becomes of the threat of the land after the development of a myriad of space-binding

technologies in the last century and a half? The Minute "Expo '67" provides us with an answer. It is set in Montreal in 1963 and begins with scene of a lone man who is holding architectural plans in his hand and staring out over the St. Lawrence. A second man pulls up in a car, gets out and then the first one tells him that "We're going to build it right here.". The second man replies in a scoffing manner: "Oh yeah, sure. We'll give wetsuits to all the visitors". The first then suggests that since there's no vacant land left in Montreal, they'll make it by building an island in the middle of the river. The second replies: "How? Dig up Mount Royal?". The first then explains that the island will be built using the earth and stone dug up during the construction of Montreal's subway system. As we then watch a series of archival films and photographs documenting the construction of the artificial island, a voice over tells us that "twelve months and twenty-five million tons of fill later, Ste. Hélène's Island was reshaped and Île Notre-Dame was created. Montreal's Expo '67 was the most successful World's Fair of the twentieth century" (Heritage Project, 1998).

Here again, we have a now familiar narrative sequence: a visionary sees a possibility to overcome one of the apparent limitations imposed on humanity by the natural order and reshape that order to better suit humanity's purposes. His ideas are resisted by another who doesn't share his capacity to 'think outside of the box'. He persists and we watch as his vision of a domesticated and reshaped natural order takes a form that will bring him and, by association, Canada global acclaim. If we compare the vision of the natural order in this Minute to that of "Saguenay Fire" we can now view technological nationalism in its fully triumphalist mode. Whereas, in the latter, nature is an autonomous

entity that retain the capacity to erase the human presence from the landscape in a matter of hours, "Expo '67" portrays nature as having been fully subjugated to the point where it has become, in the words of Heidegger, a 'standing-reserve' infinitely malleable and always accessible for humanity's various technological projects. Once this occurs, Heidegger warns in The Question Concerning Technology (1977): "the illusion comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: it seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself" (Heidegger, 1977: 308).

One Heritage Minute in particular might be held up as an objection to such a reading: "Emily Carr". It begins with the scene of a young woman being ferried to an island off the coast of British Columbia. A voice over reads: "Behold Emily Carr, painter, about to encounter the force that will consume her life". She gets off the boat and wanders about the island with brushes, paints and easels at hand. As she moves, the camera jump-cuts to a series of picturesque tableaux of giant fir trees, ancient totem poles, waves crashing on rock faces, grizzlies fishing for leaping salmon and so on. A woman's voice (presumably Carr's) intones: "How tightly they seal their secrets from me, humble and pleading before the great trees, awaiting the invitation from the spirits to come and meet me halfway". In this initial sequence, it would seem that the purely instrumental attitude towards nature celebrated in "Expo'67" is being challenged by a romantic vision that views it, as well as native culture, as having an autonomy and a grandeur of its own. However, Carr's words work to reinstate the instrumentalist vision. While her words draw on the vocabulary of the suppliant acolyte to connote a level of humility that is not present

in “Expo ‘67”, there are two assumptions that they share with the instrumentalist vision.

First of all, while nature and native culture might now be opaque to her (as they were to Charlevoix), if she works to develop the appropriate knowledge, she will unravel their ‘secrets’ and be able to better exercise control over them. Secondly, there is also the ‘colonialist’ assumption that both native culture and nature have no choice but to ‘meet her halfway’—they have some sort of moral duty to translate themselves into her terms.

In the next scene of this Minute, an older Carr frenetically paints a canvas as she narrates: “Nothing is still now, everything is alive. At last, I knew I must see through the totem itself, the mythic eye of the forest”. As she speaks, filmed images of the British Columbia wilderness are juxtaposed to her paintings to reveal her success in ‘capturing’ that wilderness on her canvasses (Heritage Project, 1998). In this scene, we see the fruition of Carr’s search for the secrets of nature and native culture in her frenetic activity *à la* Fleming and Eadie. The secret, she tells us, consists in an act of appropriation: she has learned to ‘see’ like nature or, at least, its essentialized and mythicized human analogue, traditional native culture. Learning to ‘see’, however, is only valuable insofar as it serves the instrumental end of reducing the opacity of the new world and facilitating the colonizer’s dynamic project of ‘capturing’ that world in images, maps, with fences, mines, roads and satellite networks. The operationalization of her newly gained power to survey, predict and control the Canadian landscape is what is celebrated in the final scenes of this Minute that depict a now gray-haired Emily Carr at work. It ends with a scene of her on a rocky outcropping with her dog and her easel. In a voice over, she declares that “This is my country, what I want to express is here and I love it. Amen.” In this ending scene, Carr

claims as her own the land that had once appeared to her as foreboding, opaque and populated by, to paraphrase George Grant, the gods of another race. However, through the development of her ability to 'see' the land, she makes it her own property and even comes to love it because, to go back to Heidegger, it now manifests itself in her image.

In rewriting Canadian space, the once-threatening land and its aboriginal inhabitants are domesticated and redeployed to provide that space with 'local character' very much in the same way that suburban streets like "Huron", "Crestview" or "Alta Vista" are named after features of the landscape which have been chopped down, filled in or leveled off in order to erect tract housing or after the indigenous peoples from whom the land had been stolen. In this way, Carr's paintings are a celebration of the fact that as a result of the colonizer's increased capacities for surveillance, prediction and intervention, the nature and the indigenous peoples who once seemed so threatening to white Canada have now been suppressed and can be repackaged as postcards and prints representing a distinguishably Canadian landscape. As Eva Mackey explains, in the early-to-mid 20th century in which Carr and others like the Group of Seven undertook this repackaging, "Canada was transformed from a frontier nation to a Western industrial nation. Simultaneous with this 'march of progress' and 'civilisation', the very phenomena that were being destroyed were now invoked to represent Canadian nationhood. Native people...began to be integrated into official national iconography. Meanwhile, the Northern wilderness would come to represent Canada" (Mackey, 1999: 40). While Mackey seems to see this as an irony, the celebration of those things that white Canadians

have transformed into their own mute minions is quite consistent with the narrative of overcoming as we have seen it develop in the Minutes.

The Narrative of Overcoming and the Depoliticization of Canadian History

In the previous chapter, I briefly discussed how, in the Heritage Project, the subject matters of formal national and cultural/racial politics disappear almost completely by the middle of the 19th century in favour of a depoliticized narrative of progress that celebrates technological developments and Canadian contributions to 'transnational culture'. Several reasons could be adduced for this depoliticization of progress. One reason is that the closer that represented events come to impinging on living memory, the more likely it is that potential viewers can summon alternative and even conflicting memories of those events. This is especially the case in the realm of politics and for a project that seeks to bind Canadians together, scratching at the scars of past wounds is to be avoided. This explains, at least partially, the focus on technology. As Jacques Ellul argues in *Propaganda* (1965), the only theme in propaganda that can hope to find support across the political and cultural board in western modernity is that "The progress of technology is continuous; propaganda must voice this reality... All propaganda must play on the fact that the nation will be industrialized, more will be produced, greater progress is imminent, and so on." (Ellul, 1965: 40). As I argued in my discussion of "Thomas Eadie" and "Avro Arrow", the Minutes seek to situate the locus of national self-realization in the innovating activities of the Canadian financial, commercial and media capitalist class fraction. In the battle for hegemony in contemporary Canada, this class fraction often finds itself in direct competition with the traditional Canadian governmental elite. In order to tilt

the balance in their favour, the political—the ‘base’ of the latter elite’s power—is both marginalized and portrayed as a relic of the past that, while it once had its uses, now stands in the way of future national progress.

That said, there are a number of Minutes set in the late 19th and the early 20th centuries that could easily be deployed to cast serious doubt on this reading. Minutes like “Jennie Trout”, “Agnes McPhail” and “Nellie McClung”, it could be objected, all deal with important political issues about women’s formal and informal exclusion from educational and political institutions. “Jennie Trout”, for example, is set in the University of Toronto in 1871 and begins with a group of male students in a lecture hall pounding on their desks and shouting things like “Send them home!” and “Get rid of them!”. The camera pans to the professor who settles the class down and begins to speak. With an anatomical diagram of a nude man with a paper fig leaf taped over his crotch hung behind him, the professor tells the class: “And so this organ, which I regret I cannot name because of the presence of these members of the weaker sex who, although they are married, could not possibly endure...”. His remarks are interrupted by laughter and renewed calls to “Get them out!”. As this goes on, the camera pans to two women in the lecture hall, one of whom finally gets up and walks toward the podium while telling the professor that “If you don’t bring this classroom under control, I will repeat every word of this disgusting lecture to your charming wife”. As she reaches the podium, she tears a paper fig leaf off of the poster and she and the other woman leave the lecture hall. As they walk away, a voice over in a woman’s voice narrates that “My friend, Jennie Trout, was not the only woman to face

this kind of thing in medical school but she became the first woman licensed to practice medicine in Canada” (Heritage Project, 1998).

The narrative sequence of this Minute closely follows that of Minutes like “Thomas Eadie”, as well as “Hart and Papineau”. Our heroine aspires to do something innovative but her aspirations are resisted by the regressive forces of tradition. However, she perseveres and overcomes those forces to finally realize her goal. This, along with the rest of the Minutes detailing the struggles of white middle- and upper-class women, as well as Minutes such as “Jacque Plante” in which Plante flaunts traditional macho codes to be the first hockey goalie to wear a face mask, or “John Humphreys” in which a Canadian lawyer fends off resistance from traditional state elites to pen the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are all excellent examples of the narrative of overcoming in its social moment. As Richard Tarnas explains, implicit in this grand narrative is the belief that “modern culture evolved and left behind the ancient and medieval world views as primitive, superstitious, childish, unscientific and oppressive... The way was now open to envision and establish a new form of society, based on self-evident principles of individual liberty and rationality. For the strategies and principles that science had shown to be so useful for discovering truth in nature were clearly relevant to the social realm as well.” (Tarnas, 1991: 283)

Along with its reconfirmation of the narrative of overcoming, “Jennie Trout” is also interesting because it is a prime example of the hegemonic powers of what Roland Barthes has described as “the inoculation”. As he explains in Mythologies: “One immunizes the content of the collective imagination by means of a small inoculation of

acknowledged evil; one thus protects it against the risk of a generalized subversion” (Barthes, 1981: 150). In the figure of Jennie Trout—a strong, intelligent and courageous woman, the radical potential of the feminist movement to subvert existing social hierarchies is indexed. However, that potential is quickly contained.

On the face of it, in detailing of the struggles of one woman to enter a previously all-male bastion, “Jennie Trout” seems to be quite radical. However, its radicalism is contained through the repeated reidentification of women with the domestic sphere. As the reader has probably already noticed, the *Heritage Minutes* tend to use words in a very economical manner. As a result, whenever something is repeated, it is a pretty good guess that a point is being made or a connotation suggested that is very important to the writers. That is why we should be particularly attuned to the fact that the institution of marriage is referred to not once but twice in this Minute when the professor mentions that the two female students are both married and when Jennie Trout threatens to tell the professor’s wife about his lecture. As feminists have long argued, the identification of women with domestic sphere and the assertion of the primacy of heterosexual monogamy have been two of the main discursive strategies in the construction and maintenance of patriarchy. As a result, while it does open up the potential for the increase in access for some women to educational institutions, the Minute leaves much of patriarchy’s core intact.

A related way in which “Jennie Trout” seeks to minimize the radical potential of the feminist movement is to ‘personalize’ inter-gender conflict. Presumably, when Trout was accepted to the medical school, it would have been with the explicit support of the institution. Now, while it is only a fairly recent development that university faculty are

consistently subject to disciplinary measures for verbally abusing students, engaging in overtly racist and sexist behaviour and so on, it seems that Trout would have had some recourse within the university or by means of the press, the legal system or the nascent suffrage movement to voice her grievances and to try to put an end to this discrimination. However, these are all non-options in this Minute. The potential of an appeal to the 'public sphere' is tacitly rejected in favor of a personal solution to what would seem to be a 'political problem'. In solving the problem by threatening to tell the professor's wife, the Minute depoliticizes patriarchal assumptions and turns them into examples of the individual's 'bad manners'. The political, as it were, becomes the personal. Such a personalization of the political saves its audience from having to think any further about the existence of structural inequalities or from using institutions like the state or the legal system to rectify such inequalities.

Such an overt depoliticization is not the case, however, with all the Minutes detailing the historic experience of Canadian women. "Nellie McLung", for example, recounts Nellie McClung's successful campaign to win the right of Manitoba Women to vote in provincial elections while "Emily Murphy" celebrates the 'Famous Five's' successful campaign to secure the status of 'a person' for Canadian women. Similarly, "Agnes McPhail" details how Canada's first female MP led the battle to reform the Canadian penal system. In all of these Minutes, their heroines are portrayed as brave innovators who overcome the resistance of their troglodytic male counterparts to secure greater liberties and rights for women and other disenfranchised groups. Perhaps nothing better summarizes the basic narrative thrust of these Minutes than the opening scene from

“Agnes McPhail” in which she enters Kingston penitentiary only to be met by the warden who tells her that “I know that you’re an MP, Mrs. McPhail, but a woman has never...”. He is then interrupted by McPhail who retorts: “I’m not leaving until I do!” (Heritage Project, 1998).

As Nicole Neatby pointed out, what is most interesting about this celebration of the Canadian women’s liberation movement is its silences. In equating ‘women’s liberation’ with the increased access to ‘the professions’ and the sphere of ‘formal politics’, these Minutes emplot the ‘women’s movement’ along decidedly liberal feminist lines. According to liberal feminists, “The true rewards of social life—money, power, status, freedom, opportunities for growth and self-worth—are to be found in the public sphere” (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 1988: 296) and gender equality will ensue once women gain full access to that sphere. As bell hooks argues in Feminist Theory: from margin to center, the problem with this definition of feminism is that it represents the interests of only a fraction of all women—the upwardly mobile white and educated women of the middle and upper classes. As one scholar she cites argues, this upwardly mobile group seeks “merely to expand the existing social structures, and never [goes] so far as to challenge the status quo... In this sense, petty-bourgeois feminism is not feminism at all; indeed it has helped to consolidate class society by giving camouflage to its internal contradictions” (Saffioti, quoted in hooks, 1984: 20-21).

What such a version of feminism camouflages, hooks argues, is the fact that gender oppression is intimately intertwined with racial and economic oppression and that hierarchies of privilege thus exist between women as well as between genders. As she

explains: "There is much evidence substantiating the reality that race and class identity creates differences in the quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that take precedence over the common experience women share—differences which are rarely transcended" (hooks, 1984: 4). However, because the white middle class women who typically champion liberal feminism have greater access to the means of dissemination than poor and/or non-white women, they were able, until the 1980s at least, to paper over those differences by claiming universality for their project. In this manner, even in feminist circles, the voices of 'subaltern' women were marginalized. Such a marginalization of the voices and historical experience of subaltern women can also be found in the *Heritage Minutes*. As far as I can tell, women of color only appear twice in all of the *Minutes*—one is a native girl in "Peacemaker" and the other is an escaped slave in "Underground Railroad" and neither has anything but a supporting role. Whenever so-called 'women's issues' are represented, the heroines of the *Minutes* are inevitably white, well-dressed and well-educated.

Along with the marginalization of racial and economic minorities comes the marginalization of some far more controversial issues that have typically been central to the feminist political agenda. In contemporary Canada, only a small minority of religious fundamentalists and committed misogynists will gainsay the right of women to practice medicine, vote, serve in public office and so on because such rights fit within Canada's dominant liberal and reformist *ethos* that seeks to create institutions that operationalize the values of individual choice, freedom from discrimination, equality of opportunity and so on. However, other feminist issues such as the defense of abortion and reproductive rights,

mandatory sex education in public schools, the fight against 'compulsory heterosexuality', the attack on the gendered use of language and imagery and other issues continue to be subjects of political debate and division. Given what we already know about the Heritage Project, it should not come as a surprise that these battles are not commemorated.

Nor are incidents such as Marc Lépine's shooting rampage in Montreal's *École Polytechnique* in which he systematically hunted down and killed eleven female engineering students. Why do such lacunae exist? Several related explanations can be adduced. First of all, by reducing 'the women's movement' to the struggles of white, middle-class women to overcome sexist attitudes and gain formal access to the 'public sphere', the narrative of overcoming is once again reaffirmed. Secondly, the celebration of that success in achieving these delimited goals suggests that sexism is 'a thing of the past'. The archaicizing of sexism also seeks to invoke closure on the feminist movement by suggesting that all of the important battles have been won—since women have achieved their goals, feminism can take its rightful place in the history books. Thirdly, the narrow identification of the feminist agenda with the issue of formal access to the institutions of the public sphere ironically acts as a depoliticization of that agenda. Along with the successful pursuit of these formally political goals, the other major contribution of the feminist movement is to shed light on the existence of another major 'site' of politics in the contemporary West—the micro-political domains of culture, language, relationships, sexuality and consumption. While few today will question the right of women to vote, the feminist politicization of 'the personal' continues to be highly controversial. Finally, the identification of feminism with the political projects of the upwardly mobile white middle

class reaffirms that group's hegemony and forestalls any further discussion of the existence of systematic racial and economic inequalities in Canadian society.

The New Version of Confederation

If the reader has any further doubts about the Heritage Project's desire to depoliticize the Minutes after 1850 or so, she only has to look at one called "Paris Crew". Set in Paris in 1867, this Minute details a rowing match between an English, a French and a Canadian crew. As they prepare to race, a voice over narrates that "Canada was just a few days old when four young men from Saint John, New Brunswick dared to challenge the French and British world champions at their own sport. In their absurd pink hats and brown suspenders, few gave them a chance against Oxford and the legendary Parisians." We then watch as the snickering of the primarily British and French audience is changed to shock and then begrudging respect as the Canadian team pulls away from the British and French crews and wins the race. As the crowd cheers and the crew celebrates, the voice over concludes the Minute by informing us that "unbeaten for the rest of their career, they'd be known as 'the Paris Crew'" (Heritage Project, 1998).

If there is a clear indicator of an explicit attempt to depoliticize the Minutes after 1850 or so, this Minute is it. Set in 1867, it is the only Minute that makes even the vaguest of reference to the act of Confederation by telling us that Canada was only a few days old when the race took place. What is more, it could be argued that the Minute is offered as a heroic alternative narrative to that of Confederation. As has been pointed out, there is little that is heroic about a group of white, middle-aged men sitting around a conference table hammering out a set of legal rules and bureaucratic procedures for the division of the

Canadian pie (Francis, 1997). "Paris Crew", on the other hand, seeks to supplement this rather prosaic narrative of origin with a heroic narrative of overcoming. In "Paris Crew", the victory of the Canadian over the French and British crews is symbolic of the nascent nation's overcoming of its colonial past by defeating its former colonial masters. In so doing, the crew changes the former colonial powers' attitude towards Canada from one of metropolitan condescension and ridicule to one of respect and admiration. In other words, in order to secure the recognition of the former 'fatherlands', the young upstarts had to defeat their champions. "Paris Crew" thus becomes a sublimated and depoliticized form of an imagined Canadian War of Independence that represents the young Canadian Oedipus successfully committing parricide.

From Comedy to Romance: the Narrative of Overcoming and Enterprise Culture

In their essay on the Minutes, Elspeth Cameron and Janice Dicking McGinnis argue that most of the Minutes fall into the traditional tendency in Canadian storytelling to validate team or group efforts and to look upon individual acts of heroism with scepticism. While I think that they are, more or less, correct in making that assumption for many of the Minutes set before the late 19th century, they are dead wrong for the Minutes set after this period. As I have argued, the overwhelming tendency in these latter Minutes is to portray the individual hero overcoming the obstacles placed before her in order to recreate the world in her own image and that it is the result of such Promethean acts of individual innovation and creation that Canada has contributed to the development of global culture and has created the best country in the world.

Rewriting the Canadian national narrative from a comedy to a romance can be seen most clearly in “Borduas”. The Minute begins with a scene of the Quebecois painter Paul-Émile Borduas standing before his easel. As he works, he cites passages from his book Refus Global that rail against social conformity, religious hypocrisy, state-sanctioned violence, the banality of commodity capitalism and other ‘mindless excesses’. The catalogue of the social obstacles to the individual’s self-realization complete, he says in a resigned voice: “Life goes on. The important thing is to create. Isn’t it?”. He then picks up a copy of the Refus and tells us, in a bored and sarcastic voice, that the book cost him “a lot...forced to finish his days in exile, the poor artist.” The ironic speech finished, his facial expression then changes to one of intense joy and satisfaction as he steps back to reveal his latest work: “Étoile Noire” (Heritage Project, 1998).

If, as Cameron and McGinnis suggest, in English Canadian culture, the community traditionally appears as a source of security, identity and well-being for the protagonist, “Borduas” figures the community as a stifling impediment to the artist’s creative impulses. Exile from the Canadian community, in this Minute, does not represent some sort of fall from grace but as the condition of possibility of doing what the Minute suggests is the most important thing in life—innovating. In other words, the community that had provided the individual with shelter from a threatening nature in Canada’s communitarian past has now itself become a threat that must be overcome in our individualistic present and future if Canada hopes to remain on the cutting edge of creativity, innovation and progress.

Rewriting the Canadian self’s relation to her sense of communal obligation can be linked to the rise of the Canadian version of what British cultural theorists describe as

'enterprise culture'. As Michael Peters describes it, enterprise culture is rooted in the neo-liberal project of reconfiguring national institutions and individual subjectivities in order to compete effectively in the global economy. Such a project, he writes, is based on a neo-liberal metanarrative which is "based on a vision of the future: one sustained by 'excellence', by 'technological literacy', by 'skills training', by 'performance', and by 'enterprise' (Peters, 2001: 9). In order to bring about this vision of the future, the metanarrative demands a 'cultural reconstruction' that involves remodelling public institutions along commercial lines, encouraging individuals to acquire and use both 'marketable skills' and "so-called entrepreneurial qualities" such as flexibility, innovation, problem-solvers, communication and so on and to think of themselves as individuals, workers and consumers first and citizens second. (Peters, 2001: 3).

According to Peters, education is at the core of this project of cultural engineering because it is through the education system that the skills, problem-solving abilities and 'useful knowledge' required for the construction of the 'entrepreneurial self' are acquired. However, the public educational system as it was constituted in most western countries in the 1970s and 1980s were seen by supporters of this metanarrative as too focused on developing 'cultural' and 'citizenship' literacy than on the development of business and technological skills. As Ken Osborne reports in his historical overview of citizenship education in Canada, neo-liberals succeeded in their project of reconfiguring the school system by using their tight links to the Canadian private news media to create a moral panic about how Canada's schools were failing to prepare their students to compete in the 'global economy'. As a result of the pressure, Osborne narrates, citizenship education

became seen as 'beside the point' and supplanted by "contemporary additions as computer literacy, entrepreneurialism, competitiveness, team-work, and so on. In short, schools were to prepare students for what was seen as the labour market of the future, which required workers to be flexible, adaptable, comfortable with sophisticated technology, able to think on their own feet and ready to create their own jobs" (Osborne, 1996: 53).

In an article published in 1999 in Maclean's, Bruce Wallace argues that the advocates of the Canadian version of 'enterprise culture' are in direct conflict with what he calls the 'old Canada' in the struggle to define "Canadian identity". According to Wallace, the 'old Canada' is one that defines Canada as a 'caring and sharing' nation that looks to the government for the provision and protection of the public good, that rejects American-style excessive individualism in favour of communal values, looks down upon ostentatious displays of wealth and success and is, on the whole, conservative and complacent. The 'new Canada', on the other hand, is not afraid to admit that it looks to the U.S. to provide it with models for success in the global economy. More specifically, the 'new Canada' argues that in order to survive and thrive in today's economy, Canadians have to embrace the values of innovation, daring and enterprise.

Not surprisingly, Wallace identifies the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI)—a thinktank and lobby group representing Canada's biggest corporations—as one of the main advocates of this revised Canadian identity (along with the Fraser Institute and the *National Post*). In speeches and memoranda posted on its website, this think tank makes its cultural agenda clear. Along with the now commonplace demands for tax cuts and more funding for research, the BCNI argues that success in the global economy also

requires a re-engineering of Canadian cultural values. In a speech entitled “Northern Edge: Building a Nation of Innovation”, David Stewart-Patterson, a vice-president of the BCNI (as well as the founder of a memorial museum on St. Helen’s Island with funds from Imperial Tobacco) argues that the traditional Canadian reserve and desire to conform to the community’s expectations often results in a suspicion and envy of those who innovate and achieve the extraordinary. This envy and suspicion must be extirpated and replaced by “social attitudes that welcome the kind of people who drive change.” (Stewart-Patterson, 2001). A memorandum written by the Institute for Jean Chretien titled “Mediocrity Versus Excellence” goes even further in arguing that

Canadian policy makers profess to seek the goal of more and better job opportunities and higher incomes for Canadians. Yet both existing policies and discussion of alternatives are consistently tinged with suspicion and mistrust of any people or enterprises that do excel. High incomes are a source of envy rather than celebration... Success at both the personal and corporate level should be an aspiration to be nurtured, a goal to be encouraged and an achievement to be celebrated. Instead, it seems to be a vaguely embarrassing anomaly that should be taxed until it goes away. The future of our economy and the quality social programs that it supports depend on changing that attitude. If we want to offer our citizens first-class education, top-notch health care and an effective safety net, we have to recognize the critical role played by successful individuals and their enterprises. (BCNI, 1999).

According to the BCNI, the best way to achieve these goals is thus to create a culture of innovation “that rejects the idea that the way we do things today is the best possible way. It is an attitude that will not stand still, that insists we can and must do better. And it is an attitude that must infuse every part of our society if Canada is to forge ahead and deliver real and sustainable gains in quality of life for all of its citizens.” (Stewart-Patterson, 2001)

It is very difficult not to “read off” a link between the BCNI’s call for the diffusion of the ‘attitude of innovation’ and the strong emphasis placed upon the celebration of engineers, inventors and commercial artists who have achieved success in the global marketplace in the Heritage Minutes set after the late 19th century. After all, many of the corporations and actors who are involved in *Historica* are also charter members of the Canadian corporate community for whom the BCNI is the main lobby organization. Similarly, it also explains the diminished role of the community and the formal political process in these latter Minutes. In the BCNI’s rewriting of Canadian identity, the communitarian ideals of the past as well as the institutions of the welfare state are seen as impediments to innovation and the entrepreneurial spirit in the present while ‘politics’ is redefined as either ‘pointless squawking’ or a series of technical problems to be solved by ever more innovative approaches to ‘governance’.

Enterprise Culture and the Need for Global Recognition

Harnessing of the past to serve the innovation agenda and globalizing ambitions of the Canadian corporate elite occurs over and over again in the Minutes set in the 20th century. Minutes ranging from “Naismith” to “Superman” to “Flanders Field” celebrate Canadian contributions, however tangential they might be (“Winnie”, for example, celebrates the fact that a Canadian donated a bear to the London Zoo that would inspire A.E. Milne to write the “Winnie the Pooh” series), to the development of a global popular culture. This is accompanied by a fairly huge silence: while Minutes were devoted to Carr, Borduas and McLuhan, not a single Canadian or Quebecois novelist, poet, filmmaker, philosopher, playwright and so on who wrote *about Canada for Canadians* is the subject

of a Minute. If pressed on the point, the producers of the Minutes could come up undoubtedly with several reasonable alibis. First of all, they could point out that they chose to celebrate Canadian contributions to global (read American) popular culture because their target audience of young Canadians will be more likely to identify with “Superman” than with The Diviners or The Great Code. Secondly, they could point out that Canadians have always judged success by American recognition. For example, in “Minute by Minute”, the actor Sharman Sturges provides us with an excellent example of the syndrome. At one point, she tells the camera that “I would like these Minutes to be shown in the U.S.. I’d like *them* to know what wonderful people developed this country” (Heritage Project, 1998). As I have argued, one can trace such a desire back to English Canada’s Loyalist heritage. As one Loyalist put it: “We’ll be the envy of the United States”. In other words, it is never enough for English Canadians that they identify a given individual as a hero, true satisfaction only comes when the metropolitan ‘Other’ recognizes her as a hero.

While both of these alibis contain more than a little plausibility, more is going on. If we look at the last Minute in the anniversary collection: “Water Pump”, we might resolve some uncertainty. This Minute begins with a scene, shot in yellow-tinted film stock to connote ‘pastness’, of a Mennonite family installing a water pump on its farm. The scene cuts to a contemporary R&D lab where a team of scientists and engineers are struggling unsuccessfully to build a lightweight, durable and easily repaired water pump for use in international development projects. As they sit dejectedly, one scientist looks at the window and sees a Mennonite woman drive by on a horse and buggy. He has a

“Eureka!” moment as he realizes that the problems encountered with the team were a function of ‘today’s technology’. Praising ‘Mennonite resourcefulness’, we see him bring in a Mennonite pump which serves as the model for the new pump. The final scene is set in sub-Saharan Africa where the new pump is being used to bring water to an arid land. One African woman, speaking through an interpreter, tells the Canadian development worker (whom we identify by his white skin, well-fed appearance and retro-colonialist Tilley hat) that “You Canadians have such modern ideas”. He then responds: “Tell her it’s really a very old idea” (Heritage Project, 1998).

Two things are interesting here. First of all, there is the role played by the Mennonites. Here, the Mennonites are coded (and code themselves) with multiple signs of ‘pastness’ ranging from the yellowed film stock used to the 19th century clothing to the horse and buggy. The distinctly anti-modern, anti-technological and militantly traditional cultural values of this cultural group are ignored in favour of a celebration of their ‘resourcefulness’. In this way, a group that rejects the very idea that constant change and innovation is equivalent to ‘progress’ and ‘the good life’ is pulled into the vortex of the narrative of overcoming. At the same time, however, they stand as a comforting reminder of “the good old days” which can be nostalgically summoned in order to buffet us against the uncertainties of modernization.

This drawing of a ‘traditional people’ into the narrative of progress is repeated by the export of these pumps to Africa. In this latter instance of ‘technology transfer’, the gratefulness of the Africans and their awe over Canadian ingenuity is intended as a spur to encourage future engineers to work to improve the world. Several things are at work here.

First of all, there is the now-familiar tactic of using the admiring “gaze of the Other” to beef up the groups’ self-image. We Canadians are good people, the Minute tells us, because we invent things that help the less fortunate. Second point: the underlying message to the young viewers is that if they want to be recognized as having made the world a better, they can only achieve it by producing commodities for the global market rather than engaging in the kind of ‘unproductive’ political activities that we saw in Seattle, Quebec and Genoa or the equally unproductive activities of the traditional flag-bearers of modernity: intellectuals. The depoliticized and technicist character of the globalizing ambitions of Canada’s corporate elite takes on the character as a civilizing mission. If this elite’s version of 20th Canadian history primarily celebrates the ever-increasing ability of Canadian engineers and commercial artists to produce commodities that meet with success in the global market, then its utopian vision of the 21st century is one which the globalization of Canadian technologies and cultural commodities will put an end to what Eliade described as the main sources of “the terror of history”: the experience of suffering and death.

By way of conclusion, I would like to discuss the ‘gaps’ in this latter figuration of Canada’s special historic mission because they are exemplary of the gaps in the project as a whole. As will be recalled, Pierre Macherey argued that the pragmatics of encoding an ideological project in narrative form often demanded the inclusion of elements that revealed the incoherence of the project as a whole. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur argued that we can find elements within every ideology that allows us to subvert it. In the case of “Water Pump”, two such elements can be found: the Mennonites and Africa.

There is something particularly unsettling about the attempt to draw the Mennonites into the narrative of overcoming. The narrative is based on a spatialized view of progress in which societal advancement is figured as a forward movement in space towards an ever-receding frontier. Here, those who constantly push forward against natural, technological, cultural, social and, at least in the original Enlightenment version of this narrative, political limits are lauded as heroes while those who stay still or, even worse, move backwards are castigated as being lazy at best and regressive at worst. Situated within the narrative, the Mennonites would appear as a cultural group that is perverse in its rejection of this narrative's version of the 'good life' as a constant surpassing of limits. As I wrote above, the Mennonites adhere to a version of the good life that strongly stresses an acceptance of limits through a commitment to a life of simplicity and spirituality, a rejection of many modern technologies, an ecological awareness and a communitarian emphasis upon the bonds of family, the local community and so on. All of these commitments are the product of an explicit critique and rejection of what George Grant called "the technological dynamo" that is at the heart of North American culture. In other words, in spite of the fact that this Minute seeks to append them to the corporate technological nationalist project, the presence of the Mennonites opens up a gap in which resources for the critique and rejection of the technological dynamo becomes available to viewers of the Minutes.

If the presence of the Mennonites in "Water Pump" presents viewers with the utopian possibility of imagining a different future from that imagined by the corporate technological nationalists, the presence of Africa in this Minute introduces the possibility

of the repoliticization of the history of globalization presented in the Minutes. The history of Canada presented by the Minutes is one in which the colonization of Canada by the French and then the English was a more or less serene process and that all of the 'kinks' of intercultural communication and formal politics were worked out by the early 20th century. Once those problems were out of the way, Canadians could work on developing the capacity for invention and innovation that would be Canada's main contribution to the development of global culture.

"Water Pump" is meant to represent the fruition of that 'heritage of innovation' in which an artifact from Canada's technological past (represented by the Mennonites) is 'updated' to ease the suffering of the poor but grateful Africans. While the Minute is primarily intended to celebrate Canadian innovation and generosity, the poverty of the Africans serves as a reminder that the scars of colonialism, in Canada as well as Africa, have yet to fully heal. Similarly, the relative subject positions of the Africans and the Canadian aid worker suggest that the historic imbalance in political and economic power between the West and the rest has not gone away. As suggested above, the male Canadian development worker is dressed in a contemporary version of the 'great white hunter' garb—Tilley hat, hiking boots, shirt and pants from an outdoor supplies store. The African women presented are all dressed in 'traditional' clothes and look upon the Canadian man with reverence and awe for his generosity and technological superiority. The colonialist trope of conquest as an act of willing sexual submission and acknowledgment of superiority of the white man on the part of the 'womanized' natives is reprised. In so doing, however, the representation of the Canadian civilizing mission brings to light the

fact that colonialism as both a political-economic and a cultural reality is still alive and well and in need of politically engaged critique.

Conclusion

In closing, it must be noted that in making such critiques, I am not suggesting that the world would be better off without many of the technological, political and cultural innovations celebrated in the Minutes studied in this chapter. Like most fathers, husbands, sons, brothers, neighbours, citizens and friends, I'm very happy that my daughter will be less likely to encounter any formal limits on her upward mobility, that the poor of sub-Saharan Africa will have more access to clean water and that sports like basketball and cultural products like "Winnie the Pooh" exist to amaze, entertain and edify us. Furthermore, as an apprentice member of one of the oldest branches of the 'knowledge worker' tree, I too prize things like creativity, innovation, self-motivation, curiosity and so on. My main critical concern in this chapter has been to question the manner in which all of these inventions and values have been co-opted into a self-serving political and pedagogical project that aims at establishing the relentless pursuit of technological and pop cultural innovation and the values of enterprise, innovation and so on as the *only* pursuits and values worthy of celebration. The project tries to do so by systematically delegitimizing the primary mechanisms by which we, as a collective, debate and decide what pursuits and values we will try to nourish: political and intellectual debate.

The Heritage Minutes thus seek to 'stop time' by reducing our ability to make our own history. In their vision of the future based on their nostalgic rewriting of the past, we will become nothing more than worker drones who exist solely to find more and more

efficient ways of making money for the Canadian corporate elite. Furthermore, what makes this self-serving project of trying to nourish a “culture of enterprise” by deligitimizing politics and our sense of communal obligation even more objectionable is that it has been sold to the public as a selfless act of charity designed to foster “national unity”. In other words, it uses the rhetoric of communal obligation and nation-building as a Trojan horse to introduce quite an opposite project.

Conclusion: For a Democratic Canadian Memory Culture

In this thesis, I have detailed the rewriting of the Canadian past by the producers of the Heritage Minutes in a manner that suits the political and economic interests of their corporate and political patrons. At this point, it might be objected that while this is a revision of Canadian history, it is hardly a wholesale rewriting in the manner of a Stalin or a Pol Pot. In fact, many of the values and identities celebrated in the Heritage Minutes are, on the whole, ‘functional’ for life as a citizen in a postindustrial and multicultural Canada. Furthermore, it might also be objected, what’s so wrong about Canadians feeling good about their shared past, even one that we all know to be candy-coated? In my conclusion, I would like to suggest an answer to this question.

In order to do so, I’d like to briefly describe a debate from a different national context from which many telling analogies can be drawn: late 1980s Germany. As Jürgen Habermas details in The New Conservatism (1989), beginning in the early 1980s, a group of neo-conservative German historians began arguing that it was time that Germany be allowed to be a ‘normal nation’ with a ‘normal’ national history. What does such a ‘normal’ national history look like?, one might ask. It is one in which the ‘sins of the father’ are omitted in favour of ‘positive pasts’ that “help to stabilize the cohesiveness and identity of the polity” (Habermas, 1989: 213). In order to clear the way for such a positive past, Habermas details, influential German historians like Ernst Nolte and Andreas Hillgruber have rewritten German history by trying to minimize the significance of or relativize the greatest catastrophe of a catastrophic century—the Holocaust—as little more than one pogrom among many and to encourage readers to “identify” with the

soldiers who bravely defended the 'fatherland' against Bolshevik advances from the east.

According to Habermas these neoconservative historians "see their role as, on the one hand, mobilizing pasts that can be accepted approvingly and, on the other hand, morally neutralizing other pasts that would provoke only criticism and rejection" (Habermas, 1989: 42-3).

In much the way as I have tried to do here, Habermas then links this attempt to rewrite the German past up to a more general neo-conservative program of cultural reconstruction. In such a reconstruction, he argues, cultural production is called upon to do two things. First of all, it is called upon to "to discredit intellectuals as the bearers of modernism" because their 'postmaterialist values' of democracy, self-expression and personal and collective autonomy "are seen as threats to the motivational bases of a functioning society of social labor and a depoliticized public sphere." (Habermas, 1989: 61). Secondly, "traditional culture and the stabilizing forces of conventional morality, patriotism, bourgeois religion, and folk culture are to be cultivated" (ibid.). The function of a nostalgic 'return to our roots', he argues, is to cushion newly depoliticized workers against the pressures of an increasingly competitive and volatile modernization process. In other words, while neoconservatives try to take away the average person's most valuable resource for 'making history'—democratic politics—they try to compensate for that loss by increasing their ability to stop time or to escape from Eliade's "terror of history".

"Water Pump", the final Heritage Minute we looked at, performs this dual role described by Habermas. Like most of the other Minutes set in 20th century Canada, it firmly identifies the inventor, not the intellectual or the politician, as the bearer of

modernity. It is through the act of inventing a new technology or 'innovating' an existing technology that will bring global progress. Querulous politicians, obtuse and self-interested intellectuals and their ilk just get in the way. Along with depoliticization and the assertion of the primacy of technology and the circuits of production comes an attempt to call upon the past as a source of comfort in a rapidly-changing world. In "Water Pump", the endurance of the 'quaint' traditions of the Mennonites are called upon both to stabilize the present and as a catalyst to further innovation in the future.

In his review of the German version of the neo-conservative project of memorial reconstruction, Habermas draws out epistemological, moral and political implications of such a reconstruction. He argues that if there is one vaguely redeeming thing to come out of the moral catastrophe of the Holocaust, it is that it inaugurated new openings for historical scholarship. As a result of its horrific character, he argues, Germans no longer read their own history in a catechistic manner. Instead, they must now view their historical tradition with a reflexive and ambivalent attitude. Secondly, rather than being, as in mythologies, a source of positive models for future actions and an affirmation of the uniqueness of the nation, they "can now appropriate traditions only in terms of precisely those universalist values that were violated in such an unprecedented way at the time" (Habermas, 1989: 210). Finally, the discontinuous nature of the event itself means that "we have to live with a dynamic, conflicting pluralism of readings of our own history, not under the premise that 'anything goes' but under the premise that the historical consciousness of a whole population can now take only a decentered form." (ibid.).

Such a pluralism of readings, he argues, is not something to be lamented and/or overcome but reflects the structure of open societies in which individuals occupying different social positions have the right and opportunity to narrate the collective past from their own perspective. Furthermore, he argues, the myth-dissolving power of critical history also contributes to the dissolution of a unitary perspective on the past. As he explains, while what the Germans call the *Geisteswissenschaften* are often called upon to produce positive pasts, "Their claim to truth commits the *Geisteswissenschaften* to critique; it stands opposed to the function of social integration, in the service of which the nation-state put historical scholarship to public use." (Habermas, 1989: 254-5). Given its democratic and intellectual roots, he argues, the fragmentation of national memory, the apparent loss of history, the waning of national symbols, the sense of discontinuity and ambivalence towards the national tradition should not be lamented but encouraged as the sign of a vital, democratic and morally self-reflexive political and intellectual culture. As Michael Ignatieff argues with respect to Canada, while neoconservative nationalist historians

may find it frightening that there is no longer, if there ever was, a national consensus, but all that means is that groups will no longer allow themselves to be spoken for... To long nostalgically for lost consensus is actually to long for the days when everyone knew his place, when minorities let elites speak for them. Instead of fragmentation, we should call it democratization: the chaotic, fearful immensely productive logic of empowerment (Ignatieff, 1996: 48).

While he would no doubt agree with this assessment, Habermas goes further than Ignatieff in arguing that the attempt by neoconservative historians to re-establish a unitary and purely celebratory narrative of German history is more than just an attempt to negate

the democratic potentials of history and to turn their backs on the historian's commitment to truth. It is also an abdication of their responsibility to the victims of past violence. As he argues in The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (1987), Habermas follows Walter Benjamin in believing that each generation "has to take seriously the injustice that has already happened and that is seemingly irreversible; that there exists a solidarity of those born later with those who have preceded them, with all those whose bodily or personal integrity has been violated at the hands of other human beings; and that this solidarity can only be engendered and made effective by remembering." (Habermas, 1987: 14-5). The responsibility falls, he argues, not just on the shoulders of the descendants of those victims but also of the descendants of the victors. Quoting Kierkegaard, he asserts that "He who lives ethically abolishes to a certain degree the distinction between the accidental and the essential, for he accepts himself, every inch of him, as equally essential. But the distinction returns, for when he has done this, he distinguishes again, yet in such a way that for the accidental which he excludes he accepts an essential responsibility for excluding it" (quoted in Habermas, 1989: 263). In other words, Habermas is using Kierkegaard and Benjamin to argue here that while the present generation which has benefited from the suffering of others cannot turn back the clock, it can at least partially redeem its debt to those victims by remembering and recognizing their suffering.

As for those who seek to avoid recognizing that debt by arguing for the contemporary 'irrelevance' of that past or simply avoiding the subject entirely when they narrate the national story, Habermas quite rightly points out that such acts of exclusion constitutes nothing less than an acute moral failure. Furthermore, not only is it a moral

failure, it is also a revictimization. To include those who have suffered at our hands in a celebratory narrative of rational progress towards unity, harmony, prosperity and God's special favor without full recognition of their suffering, he argues, acts as an "extorted reconciliation". As he explains, many nations and nation-states have achieved social solidarity through "the usurpation and destruction of life that is alien" to them. In such national formations, he asks, "would not the compulsory posthumous integration of those who in their lifetimes were oppressed or ostracized into an undifferentiated remembrance be only a continuation of the usurpation—an extorted reconciliation." (Habermas, 1989: 213-4). In other words, in national pasts in which the dominant group achieved its leadership position through the violent subjugation of competing groups, the attempt to rewrite the national narrative as a serene movement towards consensus constitutes a continuation of that subjugation. Past instances of ethnic cleansing, as it were, give way to an ongoing process of narrative cleansing.

In order to do justice to the memory of those victims of oppression, he argues, we must block our ears to the historicist/nationalist siren song of the promise of securing 'national unity' through the (re)construction of a unified national memory. Instead, he argues, we must give birth to a democratic and post-conventional "memory culture". In such a memory culture, the national past loses its exemplary, mythic or catechistic status and is viewed with ambivalence and critical distance. Such a suspicious gaze upon the past, he argues, will not reject the past outright. Instead, it will accept responsibility for the 'sins of the fathers' and keep those aspects of the national tradition that the group has determined to be just, useful, true and so on as a result of a process of informed

intersubjective deliberation on that tradition. Furthermore, no attempt will be made to force all members of the group to accept *all* of those values, identities, rituals and so on that 'representatives' of the community have deemed worthy of keeping. Instead, a plurality of pasts will be encouraged because such a plurality "provides an opportunity to clarify one's own identity-forming traditions in their ambivalences" (Habermas, 1989: 225) by revealing by contrast, as Gadamer pointed out, the limitations of one's own particular narrative of the past. The recognition of the need for a democratic, pluralistic and post-conventional memory culture, Habermas concludes, is both one of the major moral legacies left behind and demands made on the present by victims of the Holocaust:

"After Auschwitz our national self-consciousness can be derived only from the better traditions in our history, a history that is not unexamined but instead appropriated critically. The context of our national life, which once permitted incomparable injury to the substance of human solidarity, can be continued and further developed only in the light of the traditions that stand up to the scrutiny of a gaze educated by the moral catastrophe, a gaze that is, in a word, suspicious. Otherwise we cannot respect ourselves and cannot expect [respect] from others... An appropriation of tradition that takes a critical view does not in fact promote naïve trust in the morality of conditions to which one is merely habituated; it does not facilitate identification with unexamined models." (234)

Back to the Heritage Minutes

The reasons that I have dwelt at length on Habermas' description and critique of the attempt by German neoconservatives to reconfigure the German national past in hopes of increasing "national unity" and "patriotic pride" should be manifest. As I have argued in this thesis, there are many close analogies to be found between the German situation, the latest iteration of the discourse of the Canadian memory-crisis and the creation of the Heritage Minutes as a response to that alleged crisis. Like the histories of Nolte and

Hillgruber, the Minutes are an attempt to foster national pride and create 'empathy for the victors' by rereading the Canadian past as a dual narrative of political and cultural reconciliation and technological and aesthetic innovation. The Minutes mimic the German histories in seeking to either suppress or minimize the political and ethical significance of Canadian moral catastrophes such as the decimation of the native population by warfare, disease, territorial dispossession and forced exile in the first three centuries or so following the colonization of their lands, the reserve system and the residential schools in the 20th century, the forced dispossession of the Acadians, the subjugation of Quebec and the repeated attempts to remove 'the French fact' from the Canadian body politic or English and French Canada's long history of racism and anti-Semitism.

Furthermore, one could even argue that while the histories of Nolte and Hillgruber are morally reprehensible and irresponsible in their attempt to deal with the catastrophe of the Holocaust, at least they try. In other words, if there is something to be said in the defense of Nolte and Hillgruber, it is that while they were guilty of rewriting the catastrophic past, at least they had the courage and the honesty to do so in a public and overt manner. The strategy of the Minutes, especially those set in the 20th century, however, is much more troubling. If, as Habermas suggests, the rewriting of the past as a "consensus narrative" of reconciliation revictimizes those whose 'difference' was sacrificed to the insatiable gods of national unity, such a rewriting at least recognizes some sort of need to acknowledge their existence and their experience. Such an acknowledgment opens the possibility for a critical reappropriation of that past because it admits the existence of "Others" who might be able to tell us a very different story about

our shared past. On the basis of such an alternative narrative, we might then be forced to come to grips with the oversights and exclusions of versions of the past and possibility even begin to grope our way to the admittedly slippery and elusive “truth of the matter”.

Given that even a narrative that exacts a ‘forced reconciliation’ at least indexes the possibility of a different and more capacious view of the shared past, it could be fairly argued that the strategy chosen by the Heritage Minutes (especially those set in the 20th century) to simply saying nothing about the various moral catastrophes that have occurred in the Canadian past and the unresolved conflicts that continue to animate its underdeveloped “civil culture” (Dorland & Charland, 2002) is far more insidious and hurtful. On epistemological grounds, it is hurtful and insidious because while ‘gaps’ can be found in them that suggest to the educated reader the existence of a very different history of cultural, political and economic conflict and unresolved tensions in the Canadian body politic, they do not provide their intended viewing audience of young Canadians with any clues as to where to look for that suppressed past. In other words, while the narratives of forced reconciliation point out the existence of a different picture of the world, the silence of the Minutes leaves young Canadians without the cultural resources to even begin to look beyond the narratives of reconciliation and overcoming.

It is on the moral scale, however, that the troubling nature of the silence of the Minutes becomes most manifest. While it is at least partially true that Canada’s past has been the scene of reconciliation and overcoming, it is also true that Canada’s history is one of the suffering and the ongoing struggle for self-determination and recognition for Canada’s colonized and diasporic peoples. To carve this part of Canadian history out of

the national narrative violates what Benjamin described as our main responsibility to the victims of past suffering: to remember. In keeping silent about their suffering and their struggles, the Heritage Minutes revictimize those who suffered and those who have struggled because in refusing to recognize their past actions; the message is sent that their sufferings and their struggles are insignificant. Such a refusal to recognize their experience is, as Hegel pointed out, a refusal to recognize their humanity and the reciprocal ties of responsibility that bind us as members of human communities. In other words, cutting them out of the national past places them beyond the pale of moral concern.

As I have been arguing, this refusal of recognition is necessitated by the neoconservative project of cultural reconstruction in which there is an explicit attempt to reanimate a nostalgic version of 'national unity', to depoliticize public culture and to reorient identity-construction away from the discourse of "citizenship" to that of "knowledge worker". Again, another interesting comparison can be drawn with Habermas' account of the German situation. In this case, however, the comparison brings out an important difference between that situation and the Heritage Minutes. While the German neoconservatives followed traditional historicist and nostalgic nationalism in calling for a 'return to our roots' as the means of national integration, something quite different occurs in the Heritage Minutes. As I have detailed, the discourse of the memory-crisis that both stimulated and legitimated their production and the pious public pronouncements of their producers and supporters up to a point follows the discourse of the German neoconservative nationalists. So too do many of the Minutes set in the pre-Confederation period of Canadian history. As I have shown, they tend to follow Hegelian

lines as an inexorable upward movement towards national unity. However, a break is introduced in the 20th century in which the traditional nationalist narratives of progressive reconciliation disappears in favour of that of invention, success on the global market and the technological domination of nature.

In this way, the modernizing ambitions of the corporate elite are surreptitiously piggybacked on to the cultural and political elite's nostalgic desire for a shared national memory. While this should not be surprising—if there is one thing that this thesis has established, it is that social groups rewrite the past to suit present political projects—there is something disappointing and disingenuous about such a rewriting beyond the moral issues that I have already raised. When I began writing this thesis, I wanted to keep an open mind about the Heritage Minutes. I wanted to believe that while those who wrote, produced and bankrolled this project were probably garden-variety central Canadian nationalists and, as such, had the selective memory and hegemonic ambitions associated with that ideology, they were at least *trying* to put aside their individual economic interests in favour of some ideal of the “public”, the “collective” or the “national” interest.

However, the more I began to read the Minutes both individually and as a group, the more my view of them hardened as it became increasingly clear to me that the actors behind this project were seemingly incapable of distinguishing their narrow and self-serving economic interests and hegemonic projects from that of “achieving national unity”. As a result, the experience has led me to question the self-interested nature of all calls for “national unity”. When this suspicion is then combined with all of the epistemological, moral and political problems that I have revealed to be associated with the Heritage

Project's reconstruction of the national past, I came to believe that the nostalgic quest to reanimate an imagined Golden Age of collective harmony is an aspect of our cultural heritage that is probably best left in the past.

Furthermore, there is some indication that I'm not alone in believing this. If there is a saving grace in the case of the Heritage Minutes, it is how laughably transparent their propagandizing efforts are to any intelligent observer. I can vouch from personal experience that the mere mention of the Minutes to the average university student or university graduate generally occasions a snicker of derision. Furthermore, as Tom Axworthy, the executive director of the Heritage Project and now Historica, himself admits in "Minute by Minute", they have recurrently been the object of parody and satire in publications like Frank Magazine, television shows like The Royal Canadian Air Farce and This Hour has 22 Minutes and beer ads. While Axworthy suggests that this is just good-natured ribbing, I believe that it points out something more profound. As Mikhail Bakhtin famously pointed out in his work on the carnivalesque, parody and satire are two of the main discursive weapons used by the weak to carry out acts of profanation against the powerful. By appropriating the words and discursive forms of the powerful and reinvesting them with new meanings, parody and satire systematically debase and subvert all attempts to establish a specific vision of the world or a way of talking about the world as authoritative or sacred (Bakhtin, 1998). In other words, the existence of an established tradition of parodying the Heritage Minutes and their attendant ideological project suggests to me at least the germinal existence of a growing sense in Canadian civil culture

that such overt attempts at propaganda by public or private actors should be critiqued as being, at best, ridiculous and doomed to failure and, at worse, anti-democratic.

It is at this point that Habermas' reflections on the possibility of a democratic memory culture point the way to a better Canadian memory culture. While I have spent a lot of time here pointing out the darker aspects of the Canadian past, I agree with the Heritage Minutes that there is much in Canadian history that is worthy of celebration, such as the historical willingness to search for alternatives to violence as a means of problem-solving, the willingness as a collective to help those in need through the provision of social services, the attempt, however fumbling, to accommodate religious and cultural differences, and so on. Furthermore, I agree with the Heritage Minutes that the past is a vital resource in how we understand the present and envision the future.

However, in order to fully make use of the past as a resource for collective decision-making and to live up our moral heritage of tolerance and the recognition of and respect for difference, we must accept a willingness to recognize and learn from our mistakes and oversights. In order to be able to do so, however, the nostalgic desire to rewrite the past *and* the future as a unitary grand narrative of collective harmony and/or national reconciliation must be rejected. In its place, we must accept and encourage the subversion and parodying of all attempts to establish an "authoritative" version of the past, the proliferation of competing memories, the writing of 'critical histories' of the past and, above all, the recognition of the political, provisional and fallible nature of all attempts to reconstruct the shared past. In such a democratized memory culture, the narrative struggles that will ensue ensure that the 'stabilizing' pieties, selective memories, silences,

ideological subterfuges and the forced reconciliations of the grand narrative do not go unchallenged. This will make it much more difficult for our elites to construct a selective and self-interested version of both “the nation” and the national past, present and future. While such a culture certainly exists within the Canadian professional historical profession as well as the occasional parodic interventions in the media, it is still almost non-existent in the sphere of public history. As we have seen, in the latter, the past is still tightly tied to the cart of national unity and other elite political-economic projects. However, as I believe this study has revealed, the moral and political price of achieving national unity and economic prosperity by paving over the graves of the dead is far too high.

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