

Historical Reference.

Narrating and Visualizing the Past in Canada.

Striving to understand the past and crafting historical narratives has many functions in human society: it may help to create an imagined community and establish identities, national or otherwise; it may aim to educate, make political arguments or simply entertain. Historical narratives can be commodified or weaponized, they can spur nostalgia or deliver philosophical insight. Dominant histories determine power structures and are themselves part of an ever-evolving web of cultural, political, and social hierarchies.

Based, among other concepts, on the theories of *Geschichtskultur*,¹ the proposed project takes a deliberately broad approach in analysing the development of what could be called the 'culture' or 'sense' of history in Canada. While previous studies have looked, for example, exclusively at the professionalization of the historical discipline or at the emergence of national myths,² few have drawn connections to public efforts of historical conservation, the influence of economic and commercial interests, or the particular configurations of historical narrative in different forms of media. Academic practices of writing history are commonly analysed separately from patterns of memory, conservation or public education. If at all, relations are framed along hierarchies of knowledge and professionalism or set in terms of rivalling political agendas. However, the flourishing of public history in practice, and more recently, as an academic discipline in its own right, reminds us of the symbiotic correlations and mutual co-dependence of the public and the academic sphere when it comes to exploring the past. This relationship often fluctuates between fruitful cooperation and bitter antagonism, but these links have historical depths that deserve our attention.

The aim of the research project is to understand the multi-layered and interconnected traditions of narrating (and visualizing!) the past in Canada. Questions tackled include notions of exclusive professionalism, access and authority, as well as the emergence of institutions and media formats that facilitated (or complicated?) mediating the way the public shares in an awareness of history. The Canadian case is particularly intriguing for a number of reasons: Firstly, the professionalization of history occurred slightly later in Canada than in Europe and the United States. It became fully established only after World War One. Secondly, the process of nation building that customarily gives rise to a plethora of historical culture was conditioned by the very gradual path to full sovereignty. As major political developments affecting the national framing occurred during the second third of the 20th century (e.g. Statute of Westminster 1931, Canadian Citizenship Act 1947 and the Official Language Act 1969), a distinctly Canadian historical culture was shaped mostly by the 20th century media landscape. This timeframe enabled formats of public history very different from their 19th century counterparts in many other western nations. Thirdly, crafting history in an extremely multi-ethnic and bi-lingual nation holds further challenges. As myths were forming and master narratives took hold, historians also faced dominant external narratives; be it the History of Empire in British Canada or the strong appeal of the trope of the New World, Canada shared with its neighbours to the south; not to mention the role of Catholic thinking in Quebec.³ Moreover, how if at all, did public history and the historical profession incorporate Indigenous traditions of narrating and recording the past? The project intends to seriously probe these different cultural and regional variations, as they render the Canadian case particularly compelling. Hence, beyond familiar questions of inclusion and representation, the central

¹ (Baumgärtner and Schreiber 2001)

² (Wright 2005; Francis 1997)

³ (Phillips 1989; Gagnon 1985; Wright 2005; Berger 1986)

research questions reflect on the different methods Canadians have used to turn their past into history or different histories.

The planned research trip in March 2020 aims to explore the material available and to establish contact with colleagues. It is a pivotal step in the process of preparing and writing a larger research proposal for the project to be submitted to the DFG (German Research Foundation) in autumn 2020. As a jumping off point materials of four major organisations provide first insights into the historical scene of the country: The Canadian Historical Landmarks Association that in 1922 became the Canadian Historical Association (Ottawa); the National Archives of Canada (Ottawa), founded in 1872; the Canadian Museum of History (Gatineau) that developed from earlier geology and anthropology displays; and the non-profit organisations Historica Canada (Toronto), a key player in public history, particularly in media programming. The papers of the first three are held in their respective locations and in the National Archives. In Ottawa, I also hope to meet with Prof. David Dean at Carleton University. He is a crucial contact for the project due to his expertise on public history with particular emphasis on narratives and public controversies. I am also in contact with Historica Canada in order to arrange a visit to their headquarter offices in Toronto. Moreover, a brief trip to the University of Calgary will enable me to re-connect with Prof. Paul Stortz who has worked on intellectual culture and identity formation among historians in Canada during the world wars. It will also open perspectives on regional diversity to explored further later on. The entire trip is currently projected for 4 weeks (March 1- to March 30, 2020).

Week 1 Ottawa	The National Archives of Canada	- Holdings relating to the History of the Archives (e.g. RG 37, RG 36/5+7, RG 33/11) as well as annual reports (published since 1881) and personal papers of the head archivists)
Week 2 Ottawa Gatineau	- The National Archives of Canada - Canadian Museum of History	- Holdings relating to the Canadian Historical Association (e.g. Annual Reports of the Canadian Landmark Association 1915-1922, Correspondence relating to conferences and to the publication of the Association's journal, files relating to the organisation and administration.)
Week 3 Ottawa Gatineau Toronto	-Historica Canada	- Holdings relating to the Canadian Museum of History (e.g. Correspondence between the Board and the Secretary of State, clipping collections and reports of various commissions) - Interviews at Historica Canada
Week 4 Calgary/Ottawa/ Montreal		Presentation of the project Connecting with colleagues

Baumgärtner, U., and W. Schreiber, eds. 2001. *Geschichtserzählung und Geschichtskultur. Zwei Geschichtsdidaktische Leitbegriffe in der Diskussion*. München: Utz.

Berger, C. 1986. *The Writing of Canadian History. Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing since 1900*. Toronto: UP Toronto.

Francis, D. 1997. *National Dreams. Myth, Memory, and Canadian History*. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.

Gagnon, S. 1985. *Quebec and Its Historians. The Twentieth Century*. Montreal: Harvest Press.

Phillips, P. T. 1989. *Britain's Past in Canada. The Teaching and Writing of British History*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Wright, D. 2005. *The Professionalization of History in English Canada*. Toronto: UP Toronto.