



Memorylands: Heritage and Identity in Europe Today

Sharon Macdonald

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Memorylands is an original and fascinating investigation of the nature of heritage, memory and understandings of the past in Europe today. It looks at how Europe has become a 'memoryland' – littered with material reminders of the past, such as museums, heritage sites and memorials; and at how this 'memory phenomenon' is related to the changing nature of identities – especially European, national and cosmopolitan. In doing so, it provides new insights into how memory and the past are being performed and reconfigured in Europe – and with what effects.

Drawing especially, though not exclusively, on cases, concepts and arguments from social and cultural anthropology, *Memorylands* argues for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the cultural assumptions involved in relating to the past. It theorizes the various ways in which 'materializations' of identity work and relates these to different forms of identification within Europe. The book also addresses questions of methodology, including discussion of historical, ethnographic, interdisciplinary and innovative methods. Through a wide-range of case-studies from across Europe, Sharon Macdonald argues that Europe is home to a much greater range of ways of making the past present than is usually realized – and a greater range of forms of 'historical consciousness'. At the same time, however, she seeks to highlight what she calls 'the European memory complex' – a repertoire of prevalent patterns in forms of recollection and 'past presencing'.

The examples in *Memorylands* are drawn from both the margins and metropolitan centres, from the relatively small-scale and local, the national and the avant-garde. The book looks at pasts that are potentially identity-disrupting – or 'difficult' – as well as those that affirm identities or offer possibilities for transcending national identities or articulating more cosmopolitan futures. Topics covered include authenticity, temporalities, embodiment, commodification, nostalgia and *Ostalgie*, the musealization of everyday and folk-life, Holocaust commemoration and tourism, narratives of war, the heritage of Islam, transnationalism, and the future of the past.

Memorylands is engagingly written and accessible to general readers as well as offering a new synthesis for advanced researchers in memory and heritage studies. It is essential reading for those interested in identities, memory, material culture, Europe, tourism and heritage.

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