



# Canadian Content: Culture and the Quest for Nationhood

*Ryan Edwardson*

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A nation is given shape in large part through the cultural activities of its builders. Historically, nationalists have turned to the arts and media to articulate and institute a sense of unique national identity. This was certainly true of Canada in the twentieth century. *Canadian Content* explores ways in which nationhood was defined and pursued through cultural means in Canada throughout the last century.

As a framework for the study, Ryan Edwardson distinguishes between three phases of Canadianization: support for the arts and cultured mass media during the colony-to-nation transition; the 'new nationalist' empowerment of multi-brow culture and the call for state intervention in the mid-1960s and 1970s; and the 'cultural industrialism' initiated by the federal government under Pierre Trudeau in 1968. Examining each phase in its turn, *Canadian Content* looks at Canada as an ongoing postcolonial process of not one but a series of radically different nationhoods, each with its own valued but tentative set of cultural criteria for orchestrating and implementing a Canadian national experience.

Considering the relationship between culture and national identity, this study offers an idea of what it means to be Canadian, and suggests just how adaptable, problematic, and ongoing the pursuit of nationhood can be.

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