

KILLING MATTERS:  
CANADIAN WAR REMEMBRANCE  
AND THE GHOSTS OF ORTONA

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation combines critical discourse analysis with person-centred ethnography to examine the dissonant relationships between Canadian war veterans' narratives and the national discourse of Canadian war remembrance. The dissertation analyses Canadian war remembrance as a ritualized discourse (named Remembrance) that is produced in commemorative rituals, symbols, poetry, monuments, pilgrimages, artwork, history-writing, political speeches, government documents, media reports, and the design of the Canadian War Museum. This Remembrance discourse foregrounds and valorizes the suffering of soldiers and makes the soldier's act of dying the central issue of war. In doing so, Remembrance suppresses the significance of the soldier's act of killing and attributes this orientational framework to veterans themselves, as if it is consistent with their experiences. The dissertation problematizes this Remembrance framing of war through an analysis of WWII veterans' narratives drawn from ethnographic fieldwork that was conducted in western Canada with 23 veterans of the WWII battle of Ortona, Italy. The fieldwork consisted of life-story interviews that focused on veterans' combat experiences, supplemented by archival research and a study of the Ortona Christmas reconciliation dinner with former enemy soldiers. Through psychoanalytically-informed discourse analysis, the narratives are interpreted in terms of hidden meanings and trauma signals associated with the issue of killing. The analysis shows that many of these veterans were strongly affected by killing even when they did not know if they had killed and even though most of them tried to suppress their dissonant affects. In sum, these Ortona veterans' narratives constitute dissonant acts of remembrance that unsettle the limited moral frame within which Canadians imagine war.

The darkness crumbles away.  
It is the same old druid Time as ever,  
Only a live thing leaps my hand,  
A queer sardonic rat,  
As I pull the parapet's poppy  
To stick behind my ear.  
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew  
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.  
Now you have touched this English hand  
You will do the same to a German  
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure  
To cross the sleeping green between.  
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass  
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes,  
Less chanced than you for life,  
Bonds to the whims of murder,  
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,  
The torn fields of France.  
What do you see in our eyes  
At the shrieking iron and flame  
Hurled through still heavens?  
What quaver – what heart aghast?  
Poppies whose roots are in man's veins  
Drop, and are ever dropping;  
But mine in my ear is safe –  
Just a little white with the dust.

– Isaac Rosenberg, 'Break of Day in the Trenches'

## Acknowledgements

This has been a long and challenging project and I could not have completed it without the help of many people along the way.

My first thanks are to all of the veterans who participated in my research. I conducted interviews with 23 Canadian veterans of the Battle of Ortona. I wish to thank these men for their time and their assistance. One of them did not want to be identified by his real name, but the others are listed here.

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CWM19710261-3100  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art. © Canadian War Museum



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Men of Seaforth Highlanders of Canada (left) examining German prisoners near Moro River south of Ortona, 8 December 1943. Credit: Terry F. Rowe, Department of National Defence, Library and Archives Canada, PA-167914 (above) and PA-114485 (below).



Figure 4.  
Men of B Company, Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, on a coastal path approaching Ortona (visible on the far horizon), 21 December 1943. Credit: F.G. Whitcombe, Department of National Defence, Library and Archives Canada, PA-152749.



Figure 5.  
Men of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment accompanied by tanks of the Three Rivers Regiment, Ortona, 23 December 1943. Credit: Terry F. Rowe, Department of National Defence, Library and Archives Canada, PA-114030.



Figure 6.  
Ruins of San Tommaso church, Ortona, 30 December 1943. Credit: Terry F. Rowe, Department of National Defence,  
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Figure 7.  
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CWM19710261-2168  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art. © Canadian War Museum



Figure 8.  
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Figure 9.  
William Longstaff, *Ghosts of Vimy Ridge* (1931)  
CWM19890275-051 Beaverbrook Collection of War Art. © Canadian War Museum



Figure 10.  
King Edward VIII (left centre) reviews Canadian veterans' Guard of Honour at the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, 12 July 1936. Credit: National Film Board of Canada. Library and Archives Canada, PA-183540.



Figure 11.  
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Credit: Dan Black, Legion Magazine.



Figure 12.  
Fred Varley, *For What?* (1919)  
CWM19710261-0770  
Beaverbrook Collection of War Art. © Canadian War Museum

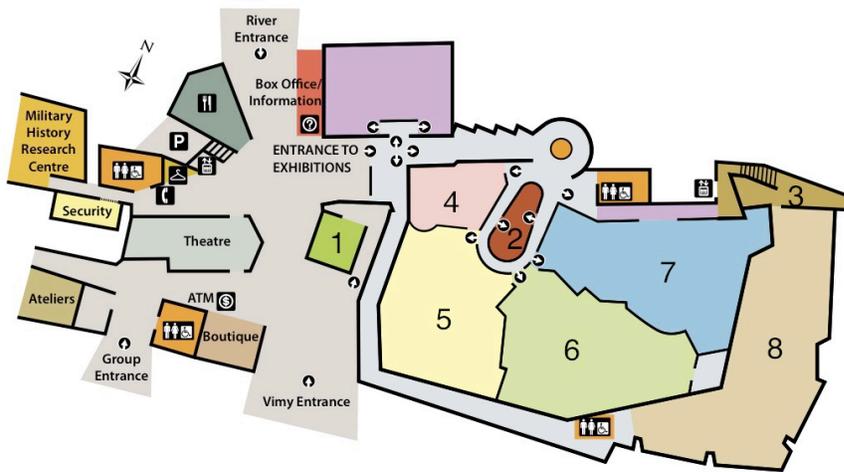


Figure 13.  
 Canadian War Museum Floor Plan.  
 Adapted with permission from the Canadian War Museum Visitor's Guide.

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Figure 14.  
Regeneration Hall, Canadian War Museum.



Figure 15.  
Regeneration Hall. The view from the window to the Peace Tower.

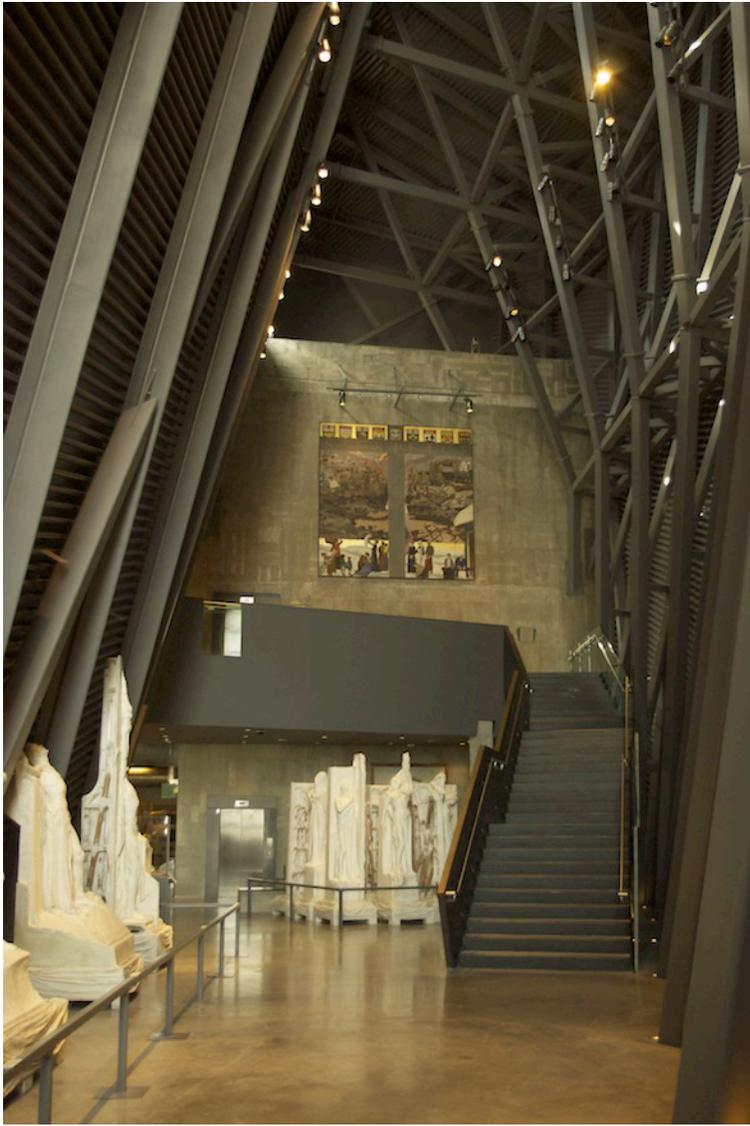


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Charles Sims, *Sacrifice* (1918).  
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Beaverbrook Collection of War Art © Canadian War Museum.

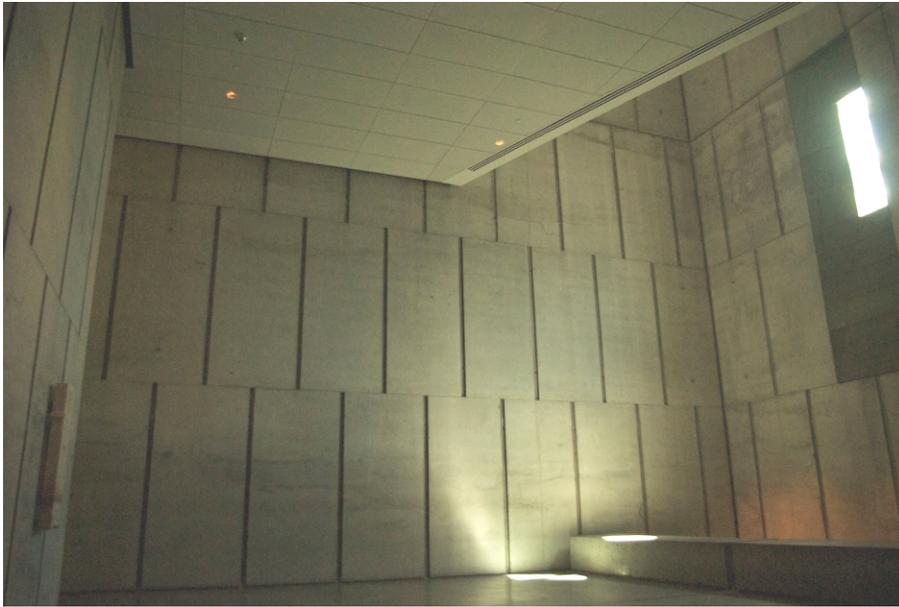


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Figure 19.  
Memorial Hall. Headstone of the Unknown Soldier. The inscription reads: "A Soldier of the Great War. A Canadian Regiment. Known Unto God."



Figure 20.  
LeBreton Gallery.



Figure 21.  
Ortona Diorama entrance.



Figure 22.  
Ortona Diorama. Canadian soldier.



Figure 23. Ortona Diorama. German soldier.



Figure 24. Ortona Diorama exit. German soldier in the centre. On the left exit wall is a painting, *Canadian Armour Passing Through Ortona* by Canadian war artist Charles Comfort. On the right is the text panel with Matthew Halton's words and the mock radio providing more audio of Halton's broadcast. Also on the right (nearest to us) is a display of German and Canadian grenades used in Ortona.



Figure 25.  
Ortona Diorama, close up of Canadian soldier.



Figure 26.  
Ortona Diorama, close up of German soldier.



Figure 27.  
Ortona Diorama, close up of German soldier's boots.



Figure 28.  
The Price of Peace monument, Ortona, March 2000.



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Details of the Price of Peace monument, Ortona, March 2000.

Chapter One:  
 An Ethnography of Remembrance and Dissonance

**The Road to Ortona**

My research began in 1998 with an interest in veterans and the modern war experience. At the outset, although I did not recognize it clearly at the time, I had a personal interest in the idea of the veteran as a man who has been away and returned home with an experience that is difficult to integrate into his life story and self-concept. I had been struck by Farley Mowat's feeling, related in his memoir of his WWII combat experience, of "not belonging to my own past" (Mowat 1979:229).<sup>1</sup> Of course the drama of war also interested me, particularly the contending forces and issues of WWII, but it was the existential drama of the soldier's struggle with identity that most captured my attention.

In the 1990s, there was increasing attention to war in Canadian public discourse. The fiftieth anniversaries of events of WWII prompted renewed interest in stories of the war and the veterans who were central figures in war remembrance ceremonies. The ageing of the WWII veterans prompted sympathy and concern with their legacy. Veterans' organizations took on a more prominent role in public debates, first in 1993 around a documentary by the public broadcaster (CBC) that was critical of the WWII Allied bombing campaign against Germany, and again in 1998 when a proposal to add a Holocaust gallery to the Canadian War Museum stirred a debate about the museum's mandate and perceived inadequacies. While veterans gained in

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1 "I wish I could explain the desperate sense of isolation, of not belonging to my own past, of being adrift in some kind of alien space." Mowat wrote this in a letter to an unspecified person at home in Canada while he was near the front line south of Ortona, Italy.

prominence and stories of WWII were increasingly told and contested, the present-day Canadian military was being deployed in more aggressive operations (in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia) that marked a departure from the previously dominant image of our soldiers as peacekeepers. War was in the air and increasingly raised as central to Canadian identity.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike some scholars drawn to this topic (e.g. A. Thomson 1994), I did not have any close relatives who were war veterans.<sup>3</sup> However, there was an older man named Wilf who did a lot of work on our farm when I was growing up. I had no idea that he was a veteran until years later when I was 18 and home from attending an international school in Italy. I happened to meet Wilf, and as he asked me and I told him about my travels, it became clear to me from his questions that he knew the country very well. In this way, I learned that the worker I had known in my childhood had been a soldier in the Canadian army in WWII and fought from Italy to Holland. Shortly after that, I went to have coffee at his house, and he told me a few stories about the war. Wilf said that he had put it all behind him and he had never really considered himself a veteran. He had simply come home and got to work building houses. One of Wilf's stories made a lasting impression on me: he told me that one day, years after the war, he was hammering a nail and felt a pain in his hand. He was surprised to find a small piece of metal protruding from his palm. As he pulled it out, he remembered being blown over and stunned by a bomb in Italy. He had not thought he was wounded, and he was amazed to discover that a piece of the war had been inside him all this time and had emerged while he was building a house in Ontario.

Much later, in 1998, with this image of the veteran as an older man with experience of

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2 In Chapter 2, I discuss the revitalization of Canadian interest in war and remembrance, including the veterans' protests against the CBC documentary *The Valour and the Horror*, the War Museum controversy, and the shift from peacekeeping to the more aggressive use of the military.

3 In the introduction to his oral history that challenges the Australian legend of ANZAC, Alistair Thomson (1994) writes of his childhood in an Australian military family and his emotionally complicated process of coming to question the nationalist and military values in which his family was deeply invested.

deeper existential issues, and encouraged by the revitalization of Remembrance,<sup>4</sup> I began to explore war memory as a topic for PhD research in anthropology. I happened to read in the newspaper about a public fundraising campaign to support a group of veterans who wanted to return to Ortona, Italy, to meet their former German enemies for Christmas dinner. The story was intriguing because of the idea of meeting the enemy and the association with Christmas; it also appealed to me with its connection to Italy. This was the start of my fieldwork focus on veterans of the battle of Ortona.

### **The Course and Conduct of the Fieldwork**

Ortona is a small city on Italy's Adriatic coast, on roughly the same latitude as Rome. This was the location of one of the Canadian army's most difficult battles of the Second World War. During the Allied invasion of Italy, as the Allied armies advanced northward in the autumn of 1943, the German army occupied Ortona and made the city an important defensive position.<sup>5</sup> The Official History of the Canadian Army describes Ortona as it was then:

Huddled against the massive 15th-century castle which crowned a high promontory thrusting squarely into the sea, the Old Town with its tall, narrow houses and dark, cramped streets, merged into the more modern section which had grown up on the flat tableland to the south. This newer part of the town was laid out in a system of rectangular blocks, although only the main thoroughfares were wide enough to allow the passage of a tank. The buildings were packed

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4 In this dissertation I will use the term Remembrance in the upper-case to refer to the discourse of Canadian war remembrance. I explain my conceptualization of Remembrance in Chapter 2.

5 The Allied invasion started with the Sicily landings on July 9-10, 1943. The invasion prompted a palace coup that deposed Mussolini on July 25. On September 10, the new Italian government signed an armistice with the Allies, terminating Italy's alliance with Germany. The German army promptly occupied north and central Italy, installed a new fascist regime (led by a liberated Mussolini) and in November formed a "Winter Line" of defensive positions across the peninsula from Gaeta to Ortona. See Dancocks 1991 and McAndrew 1996 on the Canadian role in the Italian Campaign, and Ginsborg 1990:8-71 on the Italian political and social history of this period.

wall to wall, and rose generally to a height of four storeys. From the eastern edge of the town an almost precipitous cliff fell away to the small artificial harbour, which was enclosed by two stone breakwaters protruding far out into the water. A deep ravine west of Ortona restricted the townsite to an average width of 500 yards – about one third of its full length from north to south. This natural impregnability against attack from three sides meant that the German defenders could concentrate on blocking the only possible approach – the route from the south (Nicholson 1956:324-5).

In December 1943, the Allied task of taking Ortona from the Germans was assigned to two western Canadian regiments – the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and the Seaforth Highlanders of Vancouver – supported by the Three Rivers Tank Regiment. Starting on December 21, the Canadian infantry and tank regiments fought the paratroopers of the German First Parachute Division through the streets, piazzas and buildings of Ortona. The CBC war correspondent Matthew Halton reported from Ortona during the battle:

An epic thing is happening amid the crumbling and burning walls of the compact town.... For seven days and seven nights the Canadians have been attacking in Ortona, yard by yard, building by building, window by window. And for seven days and seven nights, the sullen young zealots of a crack German parachute division have been defending like demons. Canadian and German seem to be both beyond exhaustion and beyond fear. The battle has the quality of a nightmare. It has a special quality of its own, like... the fight at Stalingrad.... the same apocalyptic pall of smoke and fire and maniacal determination.... The splitting steel storm never stops and the men in there are as if possessed (quoted in Zuehlke 1999:347).

The Germans abandoned the city on December 28. During the one week battle inside the city, more than 275 Canadians were killed or wounded. German casualty figures are uncertain, but the

Canadians found about 100 bodies left behind by the retreating Germans.<sup>6</sup>

In late 1997, the Chairman of the Three Rivers Regiment Veterans Association, Edmund (Ted) Griffiths, began to organize a "Christmas reconciliation dinner" in Ortona for Canadian and German veterans of the battle. When his request for funding from the Government of Canada's Department of Veterans Affairs was rejected, he turned to the public for financial support. The public fundraising campaign started in August, and by the end of September the campaign had exceeded its goal, ensuring that the Ortona reconciliation would proceed. It was through the media coverage of the fundraising campaign that I heard about the initiative.<sup>7</sup>

In October, I arranged to meet Ted Griffiths at his home in Ottawa. I introduced myself as a PhD candidate interested in doing research on the Ortona reconciliation. My meeting with Griffiths was not a formal interview. At the time, I was merely investigating the possibility of conducting research on the Ortona reconciliation. Griffiths told me that the dinner would be

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6 The official history of the Canadian Army reports that the Loyal Edmonton Regiment suffered 109 wounded and 63 killed, and the Seaforth Highlanders suffered 62 wounded and 41 killed (Nicholson 1956:333). The official history does not give data for the Three Rivers Regiment, but the regiment's War Diary for December 20-30 lists 18 wounded and 4 killed. The commander of the German First Parachute Division reported 455 casualties for the period of 20-28 December, including 68 killed and 205 missing. At least some of those reported missing must have been killed, considering the numbers of German bodies that the Canadians recovered from the ruins in Ortona (Nicholson 1956:333). The entire First Canadian Division was engaged in battle during the month of December in the countryside around Ortona as well as in the city itself. This was the most intense and prolonged period of combat of the Canadian army since the start of WWII, and by the end of December a total of 2339 Canadian soldiers were killed, wounded or missing (Nicholson 1956:338). There was also a sharp increase in psychological illness, with 237 cases of "battle exhaustion" documented by the divisional psychiatrist in the week of December 22-29 (Copp and McAndrew 1990:56).

The only book-length study of the battle is *Ortona: Canada's Epic WWII Battle* by Mark Zuehlke (1999). I discuss this book in Chapter 4. Histories of the Canadian army in the Italian Campaign (Nicholson 1956; Dancocks 1991; McAndrew 1996) also discuss the battle. Farley Mowat's *And No Birds Sang* (1979) is a soldier's memoir of the Italian Campaign; however, Mowat's Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment fought in the countryside west of Ortona (where Mowat suffered a mental breakdown), not in the urban battle that was the focus of my fieldwork. On Canadian tactics in Ortona, see also S. Brown 1993 and Gooderson 2007. For a German paratrooper's perspective published in English, see Bayerlein's (1999) brief memoir. There are many accounts of the Italian civilian experience of the battle published in Italian (e.g. Giannetti et al. 1983; Iubatti 1994). For English-language accounts of the Italian experience, see di Tullio 1998 and Cavasin 2010.

7 I discuss the Ortona reconciliation dinner in more detail in Chapter 5. As a shorthand, I will sometimes refer to this event as the "Ortona reconciliation" or the "Christmas reconciliation" even though the meaning of this reconciliation (including whether or not it was achieved) remains uncertain.

veterans-only but the other events would be public and I was welcome to attend. He gave me copies of his funding proposal and the itinerary. In the end, although I attended the Ortona reconciliation that December (1998), my perspective on events as an outsider was quite limited, for reasons that I will explain below.

I went to Ortona and attended some of the events of Christmas 1998, but this was not official research; I went merely as an interested individual, exploring possibilities for future research. My unofficial capacity and my fieldwork inexperience led me to stay back for fear of imposing with too many questions. I was welcome at events at the cemeteries and informal gatherings in the hotel bar, but I was excluded from the dinner, as were all members of the public and most of the journalists. Griffiths even kept at bay some presently serving members of the Seaforth regiment who came on their own initiative on leave from their peacekeeping operation in Bosnia. The fact that even members of the Canadian military were not entirely welcomed gave me more reason to be cautious in my approach. My knowledge of Italian allowed me to get to know many Ortona civilians who were interested in the reconciliation because of their own memories of the battle.<sup>8</sup> I made myself useful to journalists who did not know Italian and needed to find internet services and directions. I came home from Ortona with a number of good contacts and good relations established for potential research. The nature of the event, connecting Canadians, Germans and Italians, and the fact that I had established some rapport among all three

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<sup>8</sup> Italian civilians had been ordered to leave the city by the Germans in anticipation of the battle. However, many Ortona residents preferred to hide inside their homes and other locations (churches, the hospital, the cemetery and the railway tunnel below the city). Reasons for staying included fear that their homes would be looted by soldiers and belief that they would be safer in the city than the countryside. Indeed, many refugees were killed in the countryside around Ortona by artillery and crossfire. For this reason, some who had fled to the countryside at the direction of the Germans ended up surreptitiously returning to the city, only to endure further bombardment and crossfire when the Canadians attacked (di Tullio 1998; Bayerlein 1999; Giannetti et al. 1983; Iubatti 1994; Cavasin 2010). A total of 1314 civilians were killed during 10 months of war in the Ortona region, approximately 200 during the battle inside the city (di Marco et al. 1993). Most of the veterans whom I interviewed did not encounter civilians until the battle was over, probably because most civilians were hiding in basements or in areas (the hospital, cemetery and tunnel) controlled by the Germans for most of the battle.

groups, gave me the idea of going beyond the reconciliation (which I had barely observed) to conduct a comparative study of how three different national groups remembered a shared historical event – the comparative social memory of a battle.<sup>9</sup>

My plan for a comparative study was revised due to practical circumstances as well as my own emerging interest in the interview process. I began fieldwork with a trip to Edmonton to interview veterans of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in November 1999. I went to Ortona in February 2000 with the intention of carrying out interviews with Italian civilians who had experienced the battle followed by interviews in Germany with German veterans. However, I decided to abandon the comparative project as I realized the difficulties of financing such a large-scale project and of conducting interviews with German veterans when I did not speak the language and required the assistance of a translator. I conducted three interviews with Germans but noticed that the interviews lacked some depth or quality due to the language gap and my reliance on a translator. I decided to focus my fieldwork exclusively on Canadian veterans' memories of Ortona. I made a second trip to western Canada to interview veterans of the Seaforth Highlanders and more veterans of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment.<sup>10</sup> Before and during this second phase of interviews in Canada, I conducted archival research at the National Archives, Edmonton City Archives, University of Victoria Military Oral History Collection, and Seaforth

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9 There are many approaches to the study of social (or collective) memory. The common denominator is an interest in shared representations of the past and the interplay between memories and identities. The point of departure for most anthropological and other social scientific work on social memory is the Durkheimian observation (developed by Halbwachs [1926]1992) that "participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory" and "images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order" (Connerton 1989:3; see also Schwartz 1982; Myszal 2003:51; French 2012:340; Fentress and Wickham 1992). This observation has informed the study of national identities (e.g. Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1983a,1983b) and other group identities including ethnicity, gender, and social class (e.g. Fentress and Wickham 1992:87-143). There is much overlap between social memory studies and anthropological work on myth, ritual, life history and narrative (G. White 2000a:495). For recent interdisciplinary reviews of social memory studies, including concerns about the concept's overextension, see Neumann and Zierold 2012; Myszal 2003; Berliner 2005; Olick 2008; and Kansteiner 2002.

10 Unfortunately, due to time and financial limitations, I did not interview veterans of the Three Rivers Tank Regiment, although this regiment was also engaged in combat in Ortona.

Highlanders Archives. The purpose of the archival research was to inform my interviews. I completed my fieldwork in October 2000.<sup>11</sup>

### **Person-Centred Interviewing: Tracking Narrative Composure and Breakdown**

I introduced myself to veterans as an anthropologist interested in learning about their experiences of the battle of Ortona. I started by interviewing Edmonton veterans whom I had met during the Ortona Christmas reconciliation. Through them, and through attendance at events at the Edmonton Kingsway Legion, I met or made contact with other veterans of Ortona. I followed the same procedure for finding interview participants from the Seaforth Highlanders regiment. With the exception of two interviews conducted in small groups of two to four men, all of my interviews were private, one-on-one meetings in the living room or kitchen of veterans' houses. Some interviews went for two hours; a few were carried out over a stretch of two or three days. The setting of the interviews allowed veterans to show me old photos, books, and other souvenirs that (as the word "souvenir" implies) served as memory aids and starting points for conversation. All of my interviews were recorded for my future reference and transcription.

My approach to the interviews was open-ended. I had a short list of topics that I aimed to cover during the interview, including: What did you do in the battle? Who were you with? What do you remember about Christmas Day? Did you meet any Germans? Did you meet any civilians? I was open to digressions, as a question such as "Did you ever see any Germans?" might elicit the answer, "Not in Ortona, but there was one time that I did..." I was also open to

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<sup>11</sup> My fieldwork was funded by a SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship, IODE War Memorial Doctoral Scholarship, Mariano A. Elia Chair Graduate Student Scholarship, and the York University Faculty of Graduate Studies Fieldwork Costs Fund.

temporal shifts in the interview – that is, I did not insist that we proceed in chronological order. However, I did try to ensure that by the end of the interview we had talked about the beginning, middle and end of the battle. My questions often pursued small details to a degree that is probably rare in oral history and life history interviews. For example, when a veteran mentioned meeting a German officer during the battle, I asked him what the officer looked like; when a veteran mentioned eating dinner while guarding the window of a house, I asked if he remembered what was in the dinner. Sometimes these detailed questions prompted interesting responses and associated memories; often they led nowhere, but I believe that by demonstrating such interest in minutiae, I encouraged veterans to speak more freely about any memories that were on their minds with less worry on their part that their memories might be unimportant from a historical or scholarly point of view.

What was the point in doing so? Was I becoming a mere collector of memories, pursuing in minute detail the afterlife of a distant event? Certainly, the more that I immersed myself in the stories of Ortona, the more the distant event became intrinsically compelling to me. However, my attention as a researcher was drawn to the effects of my pursuit; that is, I was interested in what happened when I invited veterans to tell me about the battle – the manner of their responses as well as the effects that their responses had on me. In particular, I was observing the relation between emotion and narrative in the telling of war stories. Without knowing it at the time, I was in effect practicing the person-centred interviewing method of psychological and psychoanalytic anthropology.

The notion of person-centred interviews and ethnography derives from the work of psychological anthropologists, beginning with Levy's work (informed by his training as a psychiatrist) in Tahiti (Levy 1973; Marcus and Fisher 1986:49-51). In person-centred interviews,

the interviewee is regarded not just as an informant – "a knowledgeable person who can tell the anthropologist-interviewer about culture and behavior in a particular locale" – but also as a respondent – "an object of systematic study and observation in him- or herself" (Levy and Hollan 1998:335-336). The method requires a very good knowledge of the respondent's language and culture in order to pose effective questions and indirect prompts, and to interpret the potentially subtle responses (Levy and Hollan 1998:357; Hollan 2005:464). The method is also extremely time-consuming as it involves extended interviews and transcription in addition to subsequent work of analysis (Hollan 2005:465).<sup>12</sup> Importantly, person-centred interviewing should also examine the ethnographer's own subjectivity and the intersubjective relation with the respondent (Levy and Hollan 1998:347-349; LeVine 1982:292-293). This close analysis of respondents combined with self-monitoring by the ethnographer can benefit greatly from knowledge of psychoanalysis – not as a culture theory (as it has often been applied in anthropology) but as a clinical technique for close observation of self and other (LeVine 1982; Ewing 1987, 1992; Ewing in Molino 2004:83; Crapanzano 1994).<sup>13</sup>

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12 As such, it would have been very difficult for me to stay with my original intention of interviewing German veterans in addition to Canadians. As a single dissertation research project, my effort to conduct (and then analyse) person-centred interviews with a large number of Canadian veterans was already an ambitious task.

13 For example, Freud's *Totem and Taboo* is a culture theory – a hypothesis on the origin of cultural institutions (LeVine 1982:294). Clinical practice in psychoanalysis is focused on intersubjective relations, forms of expression and suppression of thoughts and affect in the open-ended interview setting (LeVine 1982:185-214). For a critical appraisal of these two dimensions of Freud's work (in favour of the latter) by a philosopher and practicing analyst, see Lear 2005:9,192 and passim.

As I see it, person-centred interviewing is a specific form of life story research. Broadly speaking, life story research is concerned with how individuals experience their lives and relate to themselves and others (Peacock and Holland 1993; Watson and Watson-Franke 1985). Varieties of life story research can be more or less concerned with establishing historical truth (in which case it is often called life-history) and more or less concerned with the self that is narrated as opposed to the forms of narration. What distinguishes life story from other ethnographic research is its greater attention to individual and personal narratives (although these are still considered in cultural context). Life story research was one of the sources of the anthropological interest in dialogue and dialogical writing styles (e.g. Crapanzano 1977,1980,1984; Dwyer 1979,1982) and it is the basis for a great deal of anthropological work on personal narrative (e.g. Ochs and Capps 2001) and autobiographical memory (see Garro 2001). Much work across disciplines is effectively life story research even if it does not go by that name, including work in oral history (e.g. A. Thomson 1994; Portelli 1991,1997a,1997b,1997c), sociolinguistics (e.g. Linde 1993) and psychology (e.g. Hollway and Jefferson 2008; Hunt 2010; McAdams 1998;

Ewing (2006), an ethnographer trained in psychoanalysis, reiterates the point also made by psychoanalytically informed oral historians (e.g. Field 1999) that the interview is an "emotionally charged process" (91). This is particularly the case when we invite respondents to tell us stories about their personal experiences. Indeed, Alistair Thomson, an oral historian who interviewed Australian WWI veterans, observed that acts of narrative composure are also efforts at emotional composure (A. Thomson 1994). It is widely understood that people compose narratives in order to find or construct coherence and meaning in events (Linde 1993; Bruner 1990). In many (if not, to some extent, all) cases, the effort to narrate or make sense is not only an intellectual effort to discover a logic; it is also (and principally, with respect to the self) an effort to achieve emotional, moral or existential comfort (Bruner 1990; McAdams 1998; McLeod 1997, 2004). We want to be comfortable with ourselves, and feel that we have achieved and can project to others a "good self" (A. Thomson 1994:8; Linde 1993:122).

The act of narrative composure is never a purely individual or intrapsychic process. Through narrative, we organize our experience according to available cultural models, schemas or frames; the same point can be made with respect to remembering as both a personal and social process (Fentress and Wickham 1992; Garro 2007).<sup>14</sup> Stories we tell about ourselves are shaped by our interests in finding a fit between our experiences and the cultural norms of our social environment (Linde 1993). This includes our feelings. The struggle to maintain emotional

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McLeod 1997,2004; Neimeyer 2004; Rennie 1994). I identify my method specifically with person-centred interviewing because the latter prioritizes the key features of my approach that are sometimes but not always shared by other life story researchers. These features are: a psychodynamic framework of emotion (that I will discuss later this chapter); close attention to language including indirection and paralinguistic communication; extended, open-ended interviews and transcription; and attention to intersubjective dynamics of the interview situation including transference and counter-transference (LeVine 1982:293-4; Levy and Hollan 1998; Hollan 2000,2001,2005). With respect to the life story research cited above, my work is most similar to that of Vincent Crapanzano, Alessandro Portelli and Alistair Thomson.

<sup>14</sup> I explain the concepts of schema and frame later in this chapter and especially in the first section of Chapter 3.

composure in the telling of personal stories is both individual and social (A. Thomson 1994). We compose personal narratives in such a way as to detach ourselves from painful experiences that we wish to avoid or forget (Rennie 1994; Crapanzano 1994); we also attempt to tell stories in such a way as to maintain our emotional composure with respect to the "feeling rules" of our culture, that is, the cultural expectations of what is appropriate to feel in a given situation (Hochschild 1979, 1983).

Notice that the above discussion has shifted from the achievement of sense to the achievement of fit and the associated point that fit is not so much about an objective or universal logic as it is about social acceptance. This brings us to the observation that some narrative acts do not achieve coherence or meaning, yet they represent potentially satisfying efforts to share the breakdown of coherence with others. Zigon (2009, 2012) argues that when an experience does not fit our familiar cultural schemas, this is a sort of "moral breakdown" in our routine mental process that forces reflection, a form of dwelling (Ochs 2012) that often leads to working through the breakdown with others. Zigon (2012) questions the "analytic assumption of the meaning-making capacity of narrative" (204) as he notes that speakers and listeners do not necessarily need to share an understanding of the meaning of experience in order to share an "intersubjective struggle to live through a moral breakdown together" (205). While Zigon stresses the moral (and therefore emotionally fraught) dimension of the breakdown or loss of coherence, Ochs and Capps (2001) and Ochs (2004) point to situations in which we tell stories in order to share or probe an enigma; this case is not necessarily a troubling emotional problem in which our sense of self is at stake, but nevertheless we are motivated by curiosity or a less intense feeling of disturbance to draw others into a mutual search for the significance of some experience. The meaning of the narrative might remain unclear, but the important narrative act is to share that sense of an enigma

with others, and to share our feeling that somehow it matters – it is worth talking about.

This point of "what matters" is important for my analysis of Canadian war remembrance and Ortona veterans' memories. When we tell stories, we do not always know exactly what we want to communicate; the point is not always so clear, and sometimes the point is not really in the content of the story. For example, if I tell stories about my late grandmother, the point of the story may simply be that I am telling it; in the telling, I am demonstrating that she matters to me, that she continues to have emotional importance to me, and I maintain the connection in recounting the story to myself and others. Narratives make or share meanings but this is not necessarily "sense-making"; the meaning of narrative may simply be: this is meaningful, this matters to me (and, perhaps, should matter to you).<sup>15</sup>

In interviewing Ortona veterans, I was witnessing and participating in efforts at composure and attunement. The interview situation is a distinctive site for narrative (and emotional) composition in that it is an oral exchange, and thus we can witness more of the thought process including struggles, false starts and corrections that would otherwise be edited out from written narratives (Kirmayer 1996; see also Goody 2000:149; Ong 1982:104); furthermore, the physical

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15 On this point, of what "matters", it is useful to note the ambiguity of the term "meaning". Considering its ubiquity in cultural anthropology, it is surprising how rarely the term itself is discussed. Indeed, in their introduction to the edited volume *Meaning in Anthropology*, Basso and Selby (1976) write: "We have not tried to define meaning" (9). The editors note the peculiarity of not defining "one of our most central notions" but suggest that the term has a productive ambiguity (9). Nevertheless, when anthropologists feel the need to clarify the term, we tend to look to linguistics and to the domain of communication and comprehension, as Silverstein (1976) does in the same volume: "To say of social behavior that it is meaningful implies necessarily that it is communicative, that is, that the behavior is a complex of signs (sign vehicles) that signal, or stand for, something in some respect" (12). This communicative function is not, however, what English speakers always mean by "meaning". Consider for example the expression, "You mean a lot to me." The expression does not mean that you send me a lot of messages that make sense to me; it means that you are important to me, I value you – you matter to me. Similarly, "I want my life to have more meaning" does not mean that I want to communicate more deeply (although that might be a related desire); rather, it means that I want to find more purpose or value in my life. Westen (2001) observes: "Something has meaning in the first sense to the extent that we understand it.... When we speak of something being meaningful to a person, however, we are speaking of its emotional significance" (39). In this respect, we might regard narrative as a meaning-making activity not always in terms of making sense of things, but in terms of finding and sharing the value of things – making things matter.

presence of an interlocutor makes it a shared process that brings to light more of the struggle between private thoughts and feelings on one hand, and social conventions on the other. This is especially important for the probing function of narrative – the effort to probe an enigma and seek reattunement after a breakdown between personal experience and cultural frames. In fact, the interview itself can prompt or bring to light a sort of breakdown (Zigon 2009), as a sensitive topic is raised and both the interviewer and the respondent struggle to find a satisfactory way to talk about a subject that is uncomfortable for one or both of them.

In my interviews with Ortona veterans, my matter-of-fact line of questioning about battle experiences prompted emotional reactions, including efforts at emotional control. I also witnessed efforts at probing an enigma and sharing a breakdown of coherence. Some of this I prompted, but some of these feelings had clearly been lying dormant and I was welcomed in to veterans' desires to share, as when Norman wanted to show me his "Safe Conduct" leaflet (Chapter 6) or when Sam invited me to stay at his house for three days to "work on his stories" (Chapter 7).

### **A Turning Point: 'The Only Thing We've Learned Over Wars'**

But what was it that had broken down? What was "out of tune" that needed reattunement? A key moment in my fieldwork that crystallized the issue for me was in one of my interviews with Mel. I was asking Mel to describe the house to house fighting in Ortona, especially the tactics that Canadians called "mouse-holing".<sup>16</sup> My questions were pursuing concrete details about the what

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<sup>16</sup> This was a tactic of blasting holes through the upper-storey walls of adjacent houses so that Canadians could advance through the holes house-to-house down a street of Ortona while minimizing the need to go outside on the street, which was more dangerous.

and the how of things.<sup>17</sup> In the interview moment quoted below, Mel started to answer, and then he rebelled against the questions, ending with a reflection:

**What was it that you'd do, when you were on, would you be led up the street somewhere, or**

Yeah, yeah, you'd go up the street and uh, go into the next house, you know, and uh throw a hand grenade first and go in with your gun and, you know. So... Yeah, these, these, these are things that I, that I say I was trying to erase from, and I did a fairly good job I guess but uh, but things that you try and erase from your memory because how much good does it do you to recall it. I, I don't think, I don't think any veteran wants, wants the schoolkids today to, to glamourise war or anything. It's a terrible thing. Nobody should have to go through it. What, what, what, what fun is there, what, what is there to killing each other, you know? And really, the only thing we've learned over these wars is how better to kill each other, and how, how many more people we can kill at the one time, you know. That's the only thing that we've learned over wars.

Mel was trying to satisfy my interest in knowing what happened in Ortona, "what it was like". He started to describe the details, but stopped at the point of going "in with your gun and, you know. So..." At this, the point of killing, he abandoned the task I had effectively given him – to tell me about Ortona – and began to talk instead about the act of remembering. He challenged the value of remembering – "how much good does it do you" – and I am sure this challenge was directed, at least unconsciously, at me as well as himself, in the sense of questioning why anyone should want to know about killing. Mel stated the issue – killing – in plain language but he made clear

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17 In all of the interview transcripts that I will quote in this dissertation, my words will appear in bold as a means of distinguishing my voice from my respondents'. This method is preferable to identifying myself and my respondents repeatedly by name, first of all because most of my interviews are with a single individual, and secondly because I will often quote long passages in which the repetition of names would become tedious and unnecessary. I will discuss my approaches to transcription and writing later in this chapter.

I will usually refer to my interview respondents by their first names. Full names are listed in the Bibliography and in the Acknowledgements. All but one of my respondents indicated on their informed consent forms that they wished to be identified by their real names.

that it was an emotional issue for him, as it caused him to interrupt his story of mouse-holing and he declared that he wanted to forget it. The emotional strain also showed in his face, in the intensity of his voice and in his stammer (his repetition of "what") as he approached his question about killing.

Mel reacted to his emotional distress by interrupting his story, but he also moved on from it to make a critical point. Mel may or may not have been directing his point at me, but he certainly wanted me to get it. The manner of my questions, and of our talk, was too unaffected for Mel; he drew attention to the fact that we were talking about killing, and his feeling that the memory of it troubles him and should be troubling to others. Later, reflecting on Mel's words, it struck me that many of the veterans whom I had interviewed were alone in their struggle with the emotional and existential effects of killing in war. This was a struggle that other Canadians did not seem to recognize or share.

### **War Remembrance and the Sacrificial Frame**

My fieldwork immersed me in stories and impressions of the emotional impact of killing, including signals of its traumatic effects on some veterans. When I experienced Remembrance Day following my fieldwork (in November 2000) with the perspective I had gained from my interviews, I was struck by the silence on the issue of killing in all of the public discourse that I encountered associated with war commemoration. On the occasion of Remembrance Day, so much was said, and so much emotion was displayed, on the topic of war, yet killing – the "characteristic act" of war (Bourke 1999:1) – was never raised as an issue. Because of my fieldwork experience, I not only noticed this silence on killing in Canadian war remembrance; I

felt it, and found it troubling. I decided to investigate this silence in public remembrance at the same time as I worked on analysing my interview transcripts.

As I examined the issue, I found other instances of the negation of killing in discourses on war beyond the Canadian tradition of war remembrance. Two early scholarly influences on my perspective were Joanna Bourke's study of twentieth century English-speaking soldiers' experiences of killing (Bourke 1999) and Adrian Caesar's study of the writing and reception of British WWI soldier-poets (Caesar 1993). A cultural pattern came into view, spanning at least the post-19th century Anglosphere,<sup>18</sup> whereby the soldier's act of dying is upheld as the essential act of war – the aspect of war that is expected to be meaningful – and whereby the soldier's act of killing is downplayed or even negated. What I find here is an effort to manage a conflict between two opposing values: on one hand, there is the moral injunction against killing, supported in Western culture most notably by pacifist traditions within Christianity; on the other hand, there is the celebration of war as an occasion of national self-sacrifice and achievement, a discourse that serves powerful interests of state and society. The dissonance between these values is reduced or avoided by an "orientational framework" (Garro 2007:62), a way of interpreting war that focuses on the soldier's "sacrifice" and obscures the soldier's role in inflicting death on others. The

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18 The term "Anglosphere" is a recent neologism (since 1999) that "refers to a grouping of English-speaking states, whose core is said to consist of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States" (Vucetic 2008:ii). McKay and Swift (2012) use the term Anglosphere to refer to the sense of shared identity and common political/security interests among the United Kingdom and the English-speaking settler-colonial nations of the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These countries are united in the Five-Eyes alliance of intelligence operations (formally known as the UKUSA Agreement) whereby they cooperate at a higher level than with their non-Anglophone NATO allies and even conduct intelligence operations against the latter. According to Vucetic (2008), the idea of the Anglosphere was originally created and used prescriptively at the turn of the 21st century among conservative elites in the USA and UK who advocate stronger political alliances among these nations. Along with McKay and Swift (2012), I am not using the term prescriptively. The term is descriptively useful, however, for identifying aspects of culture and politics that seem to be distinctive of these nations, as well as for making more accurate generalizations based on historical evidence that is multinational yet limited to English-language sources from these nations. For example, it would be somewhat inaccurate to say that Bourke (1999) has documented Western soldiers; her sources are indeed Western but they are limited to those Western nations where English is the majority language – in effect, the Anglosphere.

framework operates not only on propositional thoughts but also on feelings; it is a regulation of affect that encourages us to be emotionally affected by soldiers' deaths while being unaffected by their acts of killing. Among anthropologists and psychologists, such frameworks are described as schemas or frames.<sup>19</sup> Because the particular framework that I examine is concerned with the idea that war is sacrifice, I have labelled it "the sacrificial framing of war", and more concisely, "the sacrificial frame".

This understanding of the sacrificial frame became central to my analysis of Canadian war remembrance. Most Canadians accept our tradition of war commemoration as an apolitical, unifying expression of respect for those who have served the country in war. My analysis of the Canadian tradition includes and looks beyond the specific practices of Remembrance Day to examine the broader associated discourse that I call Remembrance. Similar traditions of war commemoration in other countries have been critically examined in terms of their political dimensions as constructions of national identity (e.g. Gillis 1994; Kapferer 1988) and their role in the militarization of society (Mosse 1990). I show that Canadian Remembrance shares these features, but in addition, I show that Remembrance discourse promotes and attempts to inculcate the sacrificial framing of war.

I argue these points beginning in Chapter 2, "An Overview of Canadian War Remembrance", much of which is concerned with the revitalization of Remembrance since the 1990s. In Chapter 3, "The Negation of Killing", I briefly widen the focus beyond Canada to examine the cultural pattern across the Anglosphere whereby the soldier's act of killing is obscured by the sacrificial frame. I also note that this frame is an affective order, and in Chapter 4, "The Affective Order of Remembrance", I return to the Canadian case to examine this order at

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<sup>19</sup> I discuss these concepts in greater depth in the first section of Chapter 3.

work. A particularly important point is that the affective order of the sacrificial frame is attributed to Canadian war veterans who are the central symbols of Remembrance. As such, the public discourse of Remembrance derives moral and empirical authority from its supposed alignment with veterans' personal experiences and memories. Chapter 4 also marks the transition from my analysis of Canadian war remembrance to my interviews with Canadian veterans of Ortona.

### **The Interviews as Dissonant Acts of Remembrance**

Returning to my fieldwork interviews and my observations of affect in veterans' narratives about killing, it follows that the veterans whom I met were having feelings that they were not supposed to have according to the affective order of Remembrance. Their stories were "out of order" or "out of tune", transgressing the sacrificial frame. What Remembrance negates, these veterans retained, with discomfort; my veteran respondents dwelled on or struggled to suppress feelings associated with their involvement in killing, sometimes even in cases where they did not know if they had in fact killed anyone. While Remembrance promotes indifference to killing in war, these veterans asserted that killing matters. Their assertions are indirect, often fragmented, and often reluctant or unintentional (that is, revealed in the very effort to suppress). The assertions take these indirect forms because they involve "inappropriate affects" that are unsupported by cultural norms (see Hochschild 1979; Levy 1984). Experiences that are unsupported by socially shared schemas or frames are harder for individuals to organize and communicate (Kirmayer 1996). This is particularly the case with experiences that are traumatic (Kirmayer 1996; BenEzer 1999; Neimeyer 2004). These kinds of subjugated feelings and memories are not immediately available to standard readings of interview transcripts that tend to focus on the manifest or surface content

of speakers' words (Ewing 2006). My analysis of my interviews with veterans has drawn on the psychoanalytically informed methods of person-centred ethnography in order to bring to light the hidden meanings and affects in veterans' narratives.

On the basis of this analysis (which I will describe as a method later in this chapter) I have organized the Ortona narratives into five chapters. Every chapter is a story of one or more veterans' struggles with the memory of killing. In "The Ghosts of Ortona" (Chapter 5), I show that the need to remember and atone for killing was a hidden motivation behind the organization of the Christmas reconciliation that was the point of departure for my fieldwork. In "These Prairie Farmers Are The Men" (Chapter 6), I show how the soldiers who fought in Ortona have been attributed a "hard" unaffected masculinity that is presumed to be a feature of their western Canadian identity; I show how this ideal of the prairie soldier is unsettled by veterans who reveal their discomfort with killing, often in relation to the very hunting practices that were supposed to make them "hard". In "Boots and Souvenirs" (Chapter 7), I show how one veteran remains troubled by his participation in killing, a trouble that he does not fully recognize yet which drives his obsessional review of the events, the meaning of which I suggest is revealed in the associations he makes of soldiers' boots. In "They Said He Was There" (Chapter 8), I tell the story of my visit with a veteran who remains traumatized by the violence that he experienced on Christmas Day when he was taken prisoner by Germans and then witnessed the killing of his captors by his fellow Canadians. In his at-first hidden, fragmented story, I find his sympathy for the German officer and an effort to bury that sympathy for fear of others' judgements. In my concluding Chapter 9, "Ortona in Remembrance", I show how the public discourse of Remembrance has taken an even stronger hold on the commemoration of Ortona, with the production of monuments and pilgrimages that reinforce the sacrificial interpretation of the battle.

I note how two veterans have returned to Ortona and participated in this local (re)production of the sacrificial frame, yet one of them performed his own private act of remembrance that transgressed the frame. Taken together, these chapters constitute an ethnography of dissonant acts of Canadian war remembrance that tell a partial story of the battle of Ortona and raise the broader issue of the limited moral frame within which Canadians imagine war.

The narratives are "acts of remembrance" in the sense that our meetings and our identities were all implicated in Remembrance discourse. Veterans are key symbols of Remembrance and any act of them speaking as veterans is liable to be framed as a reiteration of the discourse. This is especially the case when veterans speak to a fellow Canadian who belongs to a younger generation. My interview respondents were old enough to be my grandfathers, and at least part of their willingness to participate in my research was motivated by their sense of duty, consistent with Remembrance discourse, to act as "witnesses to war" to younger Canadians. This sense of duty was stated explicitly at times such as Mel's remarks quoted above, and when Sam tried to convince Jim to talk to me because "it's important to remember" (Chapter 7). Evidently, for my part, I was unwittingly (though gradually more consciously) affected by Remembrance discourse both in the selection of my topic and in my experience of the interviews, as I felt unease or "emotive dissonance" (Hochschild 1979:565) when the issue of killing was approached or raised. Thus, the narratives are acts of Remembrance that are nevertheless dissonant to the sacrificial frame of Remembrance, as the latter minimizes or negates the significance of killing and promotes an image of the soldier as unaffected by killing. One of the reasons that I have chosen the term "dissonant" is its association with cognitive dissonance as a psychological condition of unease that is experienced when a person is aware of a conflict or "nonfitting relations among cognitions" (Festinger 1957:3). Such unease can arise in "the pinch between 'what I do feel' and

'what I should feel'" (Hochschild 1983:57) when our behaviour or inner attitude transgresses a "feeling rule" or convention for appropriate or inappropriate emotions determined by a cultural frame (Hochschild 1979:566). Dissonance also has a musical connotation that indicates a lack of harmony between notes or sounds; as such, it is an apt term for an analysis of oral narrative.<sup>20</sup> More importantly, dissonance lacks any connotation of a motivated, intentional act; on the contrary, it is generally assumed that people seek harmony and wish to avoid dissonance. This makes dissonance a preferable term to others that imply a more oppositional stance, such as "resistance". I did not originally set out to challenge Remembrance and I do not believe that the veterans had any intention of doing so. There is, at least, no evidence that they held any critical beliefs about Remembrance. Regardless of intention, though, the Ortona narratives related here are dissonant acts of Remembrance because under the sign of Remembrance they nevertheless transgress the sacrificial frame of Remembrance. They transgress the frame by making killing matter.

### **Sharing and Constraint in the Interview Space**

Considering that many of the stories that veterans told me were dissonant and could be considered inappropriate from the standpoint of Remembrance, the question arises: why did veterans share as much with me as they did? To some extent, the question might be answered by the fact that they wanted to be helpful, as many of them regarded me as a young man who was in their view doing a commendable project in the service of national history and Remembrance. Also, my decision to conduct interviews in their homes may have made them more at ease.

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<sup>20</sup> In my analysis of sacrifice as a key symbol, I also propose the metaphor of a chord (Chapter 2).

However, these social situations do not guarantee openness. It could have meant the opposite: the belief that my project had public importance could have led my veteran respondents to tell impersonal, "press release"-type narratives (see Wiersma 1988), and talking in their homes could have made them more circumspect and concerned about "contaminating" their domestic space (and sometimes being overheard by their wives) with talk about unpleasant subjects. Perhaps what made the difference, in terms of willingness to share, was simply my willingness to ask open questions and to listen. Perhaps my respondents were waiting to tell such stories if only they were given the opportunity by an interlocutor who did not judge or impose.<sup>21</sup>

In any case, my effort "to create a safe space for people to talk about themselves and their past experiences" (Field 1999:68) was probably a factor. This safe space is created by the interviewer's ability to balance attentive listening with effective questions (Anderson and Jack 2003; Field 1999; Leydesdorff et al. 1999). Such a space often has to be "won through struggle" against the "symbolic order of a culture" (Leydesdorff et al. 1999:18) and in particular against the interviewer's own internalized emotional constraints (Anderson and Jack 1999:163). In the course of interviewing, the interviewer is prone to enforcing the feeling rules of his or her cultural background, as well as defend against his or her personal sources of discomfort, by changing topics, filling silences, or ignoring emotional cues that were tentative openings by the respondent (Anderson and Jack 1999:160-165). The risk is not only that the researcher will ask intrusive questions that cause discomfort; there is also the risk that the researcher will fail to probe significant topics, and may in subtle ways discourage the interview subjects from exploring certain topics, because of the researcher's anxiety that he or she is "not a therapist". Certainly,

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21 An interest in life review may also have been a motivating factor. "As we age we look back on our lives, particularly the key areas, and attempt to make sense of it, i.e. we actively work on the narrative of our lives" (Hunt 2010:141).

when approaching potentially traumatized individuals, the researcher risks stimulating memories "which victims have fought hard to keep out of consciousness in order to get on with their lives" (Leydesdorff et al. 1999:17). Alistair Thomson (2003), who interviewed WWI veterans, was concerned that unlike a therapist, he would not be available to "help put together the pieces of memories which were no longer safe" after the interview (302). Kathryn Anderson describes how the researcher's insecurities and internalized feeling rules can affect the interview and constrain the narratives that are elicited:

My fear of forcing or manipulating individuals into discussing topics they did not want to talk about sometimes prevented me from giving women the space and the permission to explore some of the deeper, more conflicted parts of their stories. I feared, for good reasons, that I lacked the training to respond appropriately to some of the issues that might be raised or uncovered. Thus, my interview strategies were bound to some extent by the conventions of social discourse. The unwritten rules of conversation about appropriate questions and topics – especially the one that says 'don't pry!' – kept me from encouraging women to make explicit the range of emotions surrounding the events and experiences they related (Anderson and Jack 2003:159-160).<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, when I review my interview transcripts, I find moments where I failed to pursue a topic because I was uncertain of my ability to handle the emotions that might be released. Sometimes, surely, veterans attempted to control their troubled feelings for my benefit, not just their own. Nevertheless, without being well-read or (consciously) practiced in the art of creating a safe

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<sup>22</sup> Anderson continues: "These rules are particularly restrictive in the rural style I had absorbed as a child on an Iowa farm. In a context where weather, blight, pests, and disease were so crucial to productivity and survival, conversation often tended towards the fatalistic and pragmatic; we certainly did not dwell on feelings about things beyond our control. As I interviewed rural women, the sights, sounds, and smells of a farm kitchen elicited my habits of a rural style of conversation and constrained my interview strategies" (159-160). I can relate to all of Anderson's feelings described above, including the rural emotional conventions and associations of the farm kitchen which came back to me sometimes as I sat with veterans in their Prairie and Rocky Mountain homes. (Although the citation is for a co-authored article, I refer only to Anderson because each author wrote separate parts of the article, each telling her own story of research, and here I am quoting Anderson's.)

space for talking – or as Field (1999) puts it, being a "safe container" for others' emotions (68) – I seem to have done so instinctively, at least some of the time. As I noted above, my interest in details, even minutiae of veterans' stories, seemed to encourage them to speak further even on topics that were emotionally difficult for them; my focus on "the facts" offered both of us a kind of security (or pretence) that facts were all that were being recounted and experienced. Perhaps in a manner similar to Field and Thomson, I did not feign neutrality, instead sharing aspects of my personality including occasional observations (usually to express wonder) on the content of veterans' stories (Field 1999:67; A. Thomson 2003:302; Portelli 1997a:11-12). My willingness to engage in this manner was a result of my study of dialogical and reflexive ethnographies (e.g. Crapanzano 1980,1990; Dwyer 1982; Abu-Lughod 1993) and the general acceptance in anthropology (related to the method of participant-observation) that sharing the researcher's own subjectivity is important for establishing rapport; it is a potentially useful instrument of research (Hastrup 1992); and it upholds an ethic of reciprocity (Dwyer 1979; Fabian 1983).<sup>23</sup> As for concerns about the researcher imposing his or her assumptions in the interview (Anderson and Jack 2003:165), I was alert to this issue as it is a fundamental concern in the training of anthropologists. One skill that may not have come to me from the overt curriculum of anthropology was the acceptance of silence; there were many moments during my interviews when I waited patiently when a veteran fell silent, and this elicited more thoughts or stories that

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23 At the same time, the fact that I was relatively detached, both in the sense that I did not become part of the veterans' personal lives or communities and in the sense that I did not react with strong emotions in the interviews, was probably important in making my respondents more comfortable in sharing troubling memories. As Hunt (2010) observes, based on his work with war veterans: "The participant often appreciates the opportunity to be open to someone with whom they have no emotional relationship. In these circumstances they can talk openly and emotionally without fear of hurting someone they know and care for" (48). On this point, my gender may also have been significant, although I am not sure what role it played. If I had been a woman, some members of this older generation of Canadian men may have held back from sharing their more troubling stories out of a well-intentioned but patriarchal belief that a young woman would not be strong enough to hear them (or from their own wish to maintain the presumed innocence of women). On the other hand, men are sometimes more willing to show their emotions and vulnerabilities to women than to other men.

might not have been shared if I had rushed to fill the silence. I believe that this skill came to me from my teaching experience (as a graduate teaching assistant) and the university teaching workshops that I had attended on effective discussion facilitation. I was certainly helped by the fact that, as per Remembrance discourse, veterans felt a duty to share their stories. In terms of the ethical concerns raised by Thomson, that the researcher will stir up bad memories and then leave veterans alone to deal with them, I believe (with Field 1999:72) that as long as interviews are conducted non-intrusively with good listening and acceptance, they can have some therapeutic value, or at least do no harm. For example, when I asked Mel if the interview was making him think too much about bad times, he told me that he would be thinking about them anyway even without my questions:

I think I told you when we first started talking, I spent the first forty years tryin to forget about a lot of that stuff because a lot of it is, is, well, death and destruction, you know, so those are things that you don't want to keep in mind, but, god there isn't too many days go by that I don't think about the war.

**Really.**

Oh yeah. Yeah.

BenEzer (1999), a clinical psychologist, notes that life story interviews conducted appropriately can be positive experiences for individuals with troubling or traumatic experiences, as individuals can find opportunity in the interview to share and find acceptance, however partial that might be (40-41). As part of an effort to make it a positive experience, I made a point at the conclusion of every interview to show veterans that I valued their efforts and that I had learned something from them. As Hunt (2010) observes, many people who recount traumatic experiences "want to feel

better after an interview, to have helped, to be useful" (48).<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, although I never suggested this idea, it possibly helped that veterans could reassure themselves that they had performed a valuable duty according to Remembrance.

### **Analysing Affect: Language, Free Association, and Trauma Signals**

In my analysis of the interview transcripts, I drew out the hidden meanings and affects that veterans expressed in relation to their roles as agents of violence. This approach to veterans' stories is informed by the observation that people "use the structure of narrative to protect themselves from having to acknowledge explicitly their inner feelings" (Rennie 1994:241). The use of such avoidance or indirection is common when there are strong "social taboos against expressing certain kinds of feelings in public" (McLeod 1997:43). The story becomes a way of "regulating feelings" as the narrator "can shape the story to move closer to, or further away from, such feeling states" (McLeod 1997:43; see also Crapanzano 1994). In particular, my analysis focuses on: the expression and regulation of feelings in discourse; the implicit meanings in free association; and the significance of trauma signals. This analytic approach draws on the anthropology of emotion and language as well as some of the clinical methods of psychoanalysis.

From a time when it was relatively neglected (Levy 1984:214-215), the topic of emotion has been a matter of increasing interest in anthropology since the 1980s (Wilce 2009:2; Beatty 2010:431). The revival of interest was initially driven by perspectives that regard emotion as a

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<sup>24</sup> In addition to helping with my research, many veterans clearly enjoyed giving me advice with my car and the fact that I was travelling a long way from home. At the conclusion to many interviews (and to some extent at the beginning) we talked about the local neighbourhood or community and I often asked for advice or directions for how to drive to my next destination, where to buy gas and get groceries, and sometimes, where I could find a mechanic (or whether or not, in the veteran's opinion, I needed one) for issues that kept arising during my fieldwork with my ageing car. On one occasion, Sam and Mel had to show me how to unlock my steering wheel.

cultural construct and a product of discourse (e.g. M. Rosaldo 1984; Lutz and White 1986; Lutz 1986; Abu-Lughod and Lutz 1990). Critics of this approach argued that it gives insufficient attention to the embodied dimensions of emotion and to the dynamics of feelings that lack symbolic support (Lyon 1995; Leavitt 1996; Lindholm 2005). Recently, there has been a trend to study the latter in terms of a particular conception of affect drawing on work in cultural studies (Mazzarella 2009; Wilce 2009:30-31). However, for my purposes in this dissertation, I find it useful (with Leavitt 1996) to return to the work of Michelle Rosaldo (1984) and Robert Levy (1984), to which I add the sociological perspective of Arlie Hochschild (1979,1983).

In her definition of emotion, Michelle Rosaldo (1984) accounted for its embodiment and further described it as an inner experience of social connection:

Emotions are thoughts somehow 'felt' in flushes, pulses, 'movements' of our livers, minds, hearts, stomachs, skin. They are embodied thoughts, thoughts seeped with the apprehension that 'I am involved.' Thought/affect thus bespeaks the difference between a mere hearing of a child's cry and a hearing felt – as when one realizes that danger is involved or that the child is one's own... Emotions are about the ways in which the social world is one in which we are involved (143).

Rosaldo provides a compelling definition that identifies emotion as a bridging experience across dualities of mind/body and personal/social (Leavitt 1996:515). However, in this 1984 paper, Rosaldo employs rather limited notions of culture and thought. On these points, Levy's psychodynamic framework offers a more differentiated perspective on the cultural construction and consciousness of emotion. Levy (1984) argues that feeling is an experience of the body, and that many embodied feelings are social, but not all such feelings are socially recognized or developed as emotions (220-221). Levy distinguishes between "hypercognized emotions" which

are subject to a great deal of cultural recognition and interpretation, and "hypocognized emotions" which are "underschematized", unrecognized, and/or minimized as nothing more than physical conditions with little or no (publicly acknowledged) social meaning (219). The latter is a kind of socially conditioned denial (234 n.7) or suppression, which may nevertheless be an object of "covert knowing" (219-220).<sup>25</sup> The organization of social relations, including relations of family and childhood, generates in individuals many patterns of feelings, not all of which are validated in cultural discourses or schemas (see also Strauss and Quinn 1997). It follows that different forms of social organization will foster and institutionalize different patterns of the evocation, schematization and suppression of emotion.

Levy's framework is psychodynamic, but in terms of social dynamics it is relatively static and homogenous. In his framework, within a given society, an emotion is either schematized or it is suppressed; metaphorically speaking, the switches never change place and they are either on or off for everyone. To better account for social diversity and conflict, it is valuable to combine Levy's framework with Hochschild's (1979,1983) concepts of emotion work and feeling rules. Building on the observation that every society has conventions of behaviour for a diversity of social situations, Hochschild argues that these conventions include "feeling rules" which are "guidelines for the assessment of fits and misfits between feeling and situation" (1979:566). These are expectations of how we should feel and how we should display feeling (including absence of feeling) which vary according to the situation as well as our social roles or identities. The same feeling may be encouraged in one context but discouraged in another, and for some

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25 Such covert knowing may take the form of cultural somatization practices such as "nerves" and other idioms of physical distress (see for example Pandolfi 1990; Schepher-Hughes 1992; Migliore 1994). Pandolfi (1990) suggests that among southern Italian villagers "the secret world of women's emotions is fundamentally expressed through the body" (255). Migliore (1994) describes how a similar covert emotional discourse was differently expressed by women and men in a Sicilian-Canadian community.

types of people more than others. When our feelings do not accord with the rules of the present situation – that is, when we experience "inappropriate affect" – we often engage in what Hochschild calls "emotion work", a form of internal labour to reshape our feelings into conformity with social conventions (Hochschild 1979:561,1983:57; see also Wikan 1989). The idea of "composure" suggested by Alistair Thomson (and mentioned earlier this chapter) is particularly appropriate for describing such emotion work when it is performed through personal narrative.

This is the framework that I have utilized for analysing Canadian war remembrance and veterans' narratives. However, there remains an issue of terminology. Most anthropologists have used the terms feeling, emotion and affect interchangeably, even within the field of the anthropology of emotion (Wilce 2009:30; Rudnycky 2011:70). Recently, there has been a trend towards distinguishing affect from emotion (Wilce 2009:30-31; Rudnycky 2011:70). This trend is inspired by an essay by social theorist and philosopher Brian Massumi on "The Autonomy of Affect" (1995). Massumi defines affect as "intensity" of bodily sensations that are experienced both on the body's surface (e.g. the skin) and in its depths (e.g. heartbeat, breath) (88). He then defines emotion as "intensity owned and recognized" (88). Emotion is "the socio-linguistic fixing of the quality of an experience" (88). In other words, emotion is the "taming of an affect" (Rutherford 2012:689). This is very similar to Levy's framework of hypocognized and hypercognized emotion. Massumi's notion of affect as "presubjective without being presocial" (Mazzarella 2009:291) appears to be the same as Levy's notion of hypocognized emotions that are generated in social relations yet lack symbolic elaboration and are therefore unavailable or resistant to "secondary cognitive evaluation" (Levy 1984:224).

For my purposes in this dissertation, the combination of Levy and Hochschild's work is

preferable to Massumi's because the former offers greater psychological and sociological precision; however, there are advantages to the recent development of affect as a term related to but distinct from emotion. First, the word "affect" is simply more convenient than "hypocognized emotion". It is also syntactically flexible, as it can be a transitive verb (to affect), an adjective (affected) and a noun (Richard and Rudnycky 2009:59). Furthermore, it has connotations of bodily sensations that may be but are not necessarily nameable as emotions. For example, if I say "she was affected", this gives most English speakers an impression of some indeterminate impact or reaction (that will be understood in context as embodied) involving the subject, whereas if I say "she was emotional" this evokes for most English speakers both an expectation of a specific emotion (anger, grief, etc.) as well as a tendency to focus on what took place inside the subject rather than on the relation between subject and environment. Perhaps for these syntactic and semantic reasons, "affect" has been employed by some anthropologists to refer to all socially-generated feelings, both "discursive and extra-discursive" (Richard and Rudnycky 2009:61). That is, the category of affect (in some anthropological usage) includes emotion without being limited to it. It is therefore convenient to use affect to refer to social feelings inclusively, regardless of whether or not they are "hypercognized" (Levy) or "captured" (Massumi) as emotions.

I have preferred affect as a term when I refer generally to the objects of my analysis. This is only a preference, however, as I also wish to be pragmatic; much work in anthropology continues to use emotion and affect interchangeably, and when I engage with this literature I tend to follow the same practice. The state of work on emotion/feeling/affect in anthropology is dynamic and, according to Good (2006), also rather "ad hoc" (531) in its use of terms and concepts; as such, when one is in conversation with many authors in this field, it is hard to insist on consistent

terminology. The important point that I wish the reader to keep in mind is that, underlying my flexible use of the terms "feeling", "emotion" and "affect", there is a consistent psycho-socio-dynamic framework as I have outlined above.

Returning to the specific topic of my analysis of the interview transcripts, my approach draws in particular on anthropological work on the intersection of affect and language. An analysis of affect that relies on individuals' explicit use of emotion words will be very limited and will miss the myriad ways in which feelings are alluded to or expressed covertly in speech patterns and linguistic forms (Ewing 2006:92; Besnier 1990:438; Price 1987:330). Thus, discourse analysis (in the linguistic sense) proves extremely valuable (Price 1987:317). We can find significance in speakers' repetitions, false starts, use of metaphors and hedges (Price 1987:317). Moments of "hesitation, word searches, self-repairs" (Ochs 2012:153) may point to efforts at suppression as speakers try to stop themselves from revealing thoughts accompanied by "inappropriate" feelings (Ewing 2006:100). Further efforts at suppression can be evident in the use of agentless passives, nominalization and pronoun shifts that remove the "I" of the speaker from the narrative (Besnier 1990:425; Wilce 2009:44-45; Fairclough 1992:179-82). This use of syntax as "syn-tactics" extends to the use of indexicals (e.g. here/there) as means of drawing boundaries and negotiating identities (Ewing 2006:100,102).<sup>26</sup> Beyond analysing spoken discourse as a text, much can be gained from observing the physical presence of the speaker, including paralinguistic features such as voice pitch or tone (Wilce 2009:42-44; Besnier 1990:430; Linde 1993:72). For example, a statement can be made in contrasting "keys of affect" in which the syntax is emotionally detached yet the voice is intense (Besnier 1990:430).

In addition to the close analysis of voice and syntax as described above, it is also valuable

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<sup>26</sup> The term "syn-tactics" was coined by psychoanalyst Hartvig Dahl, quoted in Ewing 2006:100.

to observe moments of free association in respondents' speech as respondents make unacknowledged connections across topics through apparently spontaneous but nevertheless often meaningful topic shifts (Ewing 2006:98). Free association occurs when speakers shift from one story to another as some detail of the first story reminds them of something else. The connections are often unspoken or regarded, on the surface, as trivial, but upon analysis can prove to be "pathways defined by emotional motivations" (Hollway and Jefferson 2008:309; see also LeVine 1982:187-188). My open-ended approach to interviewing created more occasions for free association, as "unconscious connections will be revealed through the links that people make if they are free to structure their own narratives" (Hollway and Jefferson 2008:315).

In interpreting the interviews, I have not foregrounded the issue of trauma, preferring to emphasize the general point that veterans indicated in a variety of ways that killing matters, that they are affected by it. Nevertheless, I do find what BenEzer (1999) calls "trauma signals" in some of the narratives. In order to explain the relation of my work to the notion of trauma, I first want to examine the meaning of the term, as it is too often taken for granted. Indeed, its taken-for-granted association with war veterans is one of the reasons that I am cautious in my application of it.

### **A Note on Trauma: The Sparing Use of an Interpretive Lens**

Trauma has become a widely-used term to describe many types of stressful experiences associated with "terror and helplessness" (Leydesdorff et al. 1999:1; Fassin and Rechtman 2009; Caruth 1995). A trauma is a wound, and a psychic trauma is a form of "emotional anguish" (Eyerman in Fassin and Rechtman 2009:16) resulting from a violation of our "assumptive world"

that comprises "our taken-for-granted senses of security, predictability, trust, and optimism" (Neimeyer et al. 2002:240). The psychic trauma entails "a fundamental rift or breakdown of psychological functioning (memory, behaviour, emotion) which occurs as a result of an unbearably intense experience that is life threatening to the self or others" (Hunt 2010:7).

This is a particular kind of suffering that can have prolonged effects on the wounded person's abilities to remember, including difficulties with narrating the events and experiences of intrusive reminiscences and nightmares (Caruth 1995; Leydesdorff et al. 1999; Kirmayer 1996; Neimeyer 2004; Hunt 2010). The diagnostic category that corresponds to this suffering is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Caruth (1995) explains:

While the precise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder is contested, most descriptions generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event (4).

The creation of this diagnostic category is largely due to the efforts of American psychiatrists and Vietnam war veterans' advocates, and it is the culmination of a long history of efforts by mental health professionals to understand and treat the psychic wounds of combat veterans starting in WWI (Allan Young 1997). However, Fassin and Rechtman (2009) argue that the current prevalence of trauma as an idea in public discourse is not due to the work of psychiatrists, but rather, to cultural developments to which the psychological professions have responded (266; see also Leys 2000). Fassin and Rechtman suggest that "trauma" is associated with "changes in the moral climate" (23) in the contemporary world, part of an emerging "ethos of compassion" (279)

and an idiom through which we share our concerns about the violence of the world (266). The idea of trauma may also point to existential crises associated with modernity; consider the following definition by Erikson: "Something alien breaks in on you, smashing through whatever barriers your mind has set up as a line of defence. It invades you, possesses you, takes you over, becomes a dominating feature of your interior landscape, and in the process threatens to drain you and leave you empty" (in Leydesdorff et al. 1999:2). Likewise, Caruth (1995) describes trauma victims as representatives of the epistemological crisis of a "catastrophic" modern age (11).

Although I share an interest in such large-scale questions, I also share the concerns of some scholars about the potential overuse of the concept of trauma (e.g. Kansteiner 2004; Fassin and Rechtman 2009). In any case, my purpose in this dissertation is not to make a claim about modernity; it is to document the efforts and breakdowns in moral composure in veterans' narratives as dissonant to Remembrance. I have used the interpretive lens of trauma occasionally insofar as it provides insight into that dissonance. It is certainly apparent that some of the veterans whom I interviewed had continued to suffer the effects of traumatic war experiences. In some of their narratives, there are instances of what BenEzer calls "verbal and non-verbal trauma signals" (BenEzer 1999:30). Of BenEzer's list of thirteen signals, I find the following in some of my interviews: (1) self-report – an event is explicitly identified as especially painful, with continuing troubling effects; (2) a hidden event – "an event which was not narrated in the main story comes up during the probing phase, accompanied by distressing emotions such as mourning, grief, shame or guilt which were not previously expressed during the telling of the story"; (3) emotional detachment or numbness while narrating events that seem to be horrifying; and (4) repetitive reporting of the same event in minute details (BenEzer 1999:34-36). Some

stories also exhibit forms of "narrative disruption" that are common among survivors of traumatic events (Neimeyer 2004). These include moments of narrative disorganization "when the individual is immersed in the perceptual elements of the traumatic experience and is unable to draw them together" (Hunt 2010:90). However, in other cases, I do not find such signals, yet there is still evidence of struggles to maintain emotional composure. Not all emotional troubles are traumas, and it is not always necessary (nor appropriate) to apply the concept.<sup>27</sup> In some cases, veterans did not exhibit painful emotions yet they did tell stories that dwelled on the issue of killing with a sense of wonder.<sup>28</sup> In sum, while I do suggest that some of my respondents had suffered traumatic experiences, I cannot generalize and present all of these narratives as "trauma narratives", nor is there a need to do so for the purpose of my argument.

One final caveat that I wish to mention on the topic of trauma is its association with victims of violence. Fassin and Rechtman (2009) observe that trauma is a means by which contemporary Western societies identify "legitimate victims" (279). We see this logic at work, for example, in Rose's (1999) statement that "trauma narratives... point to the unjustified violence done to people" (176). When the concept is applied to soldiers, then, it tends to focus attention on the soldier's own suffering rather than the suffering which the soldier inflicted on others (Allan Young 2007; Lomsky-Feder and Ben-Ari 2007; Tal 1996; Leys 2000). As such, a focus on trauma

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27 Nigel Hunt, a psychologist who has worked with British WWII war veterans, observes that some people "who live through a traumatic event are not traumatised at all. They have no difficult emotional memories or problems. They can probably look back at the event and perhaps they get emotional, but it does not really bother them unduly or in a prolonged manner" (2010:8). Hunt observed that some veterans whom he studied had worked through their traumatic memories by sharing the stories with their wives and/or comrades (156-7). The response to traumatic events also varies according to individuals' prior personal experiences, including their attachment styles (working models of self and other) developed in childhood (Neimeyer et al. 2002:243-245). Furthermore, the response to traumatic events varies with social circumstances. For example, from her study of Israeli Yom Kippur War veterans, Lomsky-Feder (1995) argues that "war is institutionalised and normalised into the Israeli social order, and so the individual [soldier] also integrates and co-opts it into his personal biography" (464). This raises the possibility that war could become part of one's assumptive world, and losses in war could be normative rather than traumatic (see Neimeyer et al. 2002 on the difference between normative and traumatic loss).

28 See for example the section "Indian Snipers and Real Killers" in Chapter 6.

can reinforce the sacrificial framing of war whereby the soldier's suffering is the central issue rather than the violence that the soldier does to others.<sup>29</sup> I have no issue with the careful diagnosis and treatment of soldiers who suffer from PTSD; my concern is that the sacrificial framing of war promotes the expectation that veterans must be traumatized precisely because there is so much cultural investment in their presumed suffering (see Twomey 2013).<sup>30</sup> For this additional reason, I have made a point of using the concept of trauma sparingly and only when it helps with the interpretation of some aspect of a veteran's narrative.

### **Limitations: What I Was Unprepared to Know**

Person-centred or life-story ethnography that is focused on respondents' emotions shares common ground with psychoanalysis and benefits from the observational techniques of the latter. The

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29 Gutmann and Lutz (2010) quote Garrett Reppenhagen, who was a sniper in Iraq and became active in Iraq Veterans Against the War:

'I'm not necessarily the victim in this scenario. And I think that's where a lot of the people who envision PTSD get a little sidetracked. There's plenty of people that have experienced individual trauma, they've seen their buddy blown up in front of them, they couldn't help their buddy from getting shot. Or they saw innocent people get waxed, whatever. There's plenty of scenarios where there is legitimate trauma, and that's going to be scarring.' But, Garrett insists, for the most part, the average American soldier is not the victim. 'He's the victimizer. And I think he feels like a criminal, honestly. He feels like the killer and the rapist and the thief, and he comes back to America and it's 'Thank you for your service.' But we're like, 'You have no idea what you're thanking me for. You don't know what I did' (144-45).

Furthermore, the discourse of trauma can have the effect of de-moralizing the soldier's potential critique of war. Sociologist and Vietnam War veteran Jerry Lembcke (1998) suggests that the medical diagnosis of PTSD became "a mode of discourse that enabled authorities to turn the radical political behavior of veterans opposed to the war into a pathology, thereby discrediting them in the public mind" (110). A number of American Iraq War veterans expressed similar concerns to Gutmann and Lutz (2010:144-52). Partly because of this depoliticizing tendency in trauma discourse, Crapanzano rejects the term "trauma" in favour of "wound" in his ethnography of Harkis in France (Crapanzano 2011:218 n.25). I prefer to keep the term, as there is much research in this area that is useful to my work. The political issues with trauma are related to larger issues of how different types of suffering are selectively politicized and/or individualized in Western culture; those issues will remain regardless of what term we use. Lutz (2009) suggests that an ethnography of soldiers' mental illnesses might "ask how a whole society, in a sense, might have the disease of militarism that [the soldier] is asked to carry as a psychological diagnosis of PTSD" (375). My dissertation points in this direction by contrasting the disavowal of killing in Remembrance with the troubled memories of killing that are privately carried by many veterans whom I interviewed.

30 In the Australian context, Twomey (2013) argues that the discourse of trauma has contributed to the revitalization of Anzac Day, and that the framing of soldiers as trauma-victims makes efforts to critique the tradition "appear to be an act of disrespect" (107).

important differences between the ethnographer and the psychoanalyst are that the ethnographer is more attentive to the social world of the respondent, more able to observe that social world outside the interviews, and is not primarily interested (nor mandated) in changing the subjectivity of the respondent (Hollan 2001:53-55). On the topic of the wider social world, life-story researchers also need to be mindful of the interview situation itself as a unique cultural form that has variable meanings and effects on people from different social backgrounds (Watson and Watson-Franke 1985; Briggs 1986; Lutz 1992). In my case, I have examined my interviews with veterans according to the above insights on language and emotion, and considered them as dissonant acts in light of their implication in the wider social context of Remembrance discourse.

Unfortunately, at the time of my interviews, I was not mindful of the affective order of Remembrance or the sacrificial frame, and therefore I did not think to ask veterans very much about their feelings and experiences of Remembrance. At the time, I was familiar with life story approaches that examined the interrelationship of public discourses and private memories, particularly approaches in oral history (e.g. Popular Memory Group 1982; Samuel and Thompson 1990; Portelli 1991, 1997a).<sup>31</sup> Most pertinent to my research is Alistair Thomson's work, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (1994) and related articles (A. Thomson 1995, 2003).<sup>32</sup>

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31 In particular, the Popular Memory Group connected the emerging interest among oral historians in matters of genre and myth with issues of the wider "social production of memory". The Group (at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies) anticipated Hobsbawm's (1983a, 1983b) notion of "invention of tradition" but suggested a less state-centred theory of domination, noting that dominant and subordinated representations of the past are heterogenous and dispersed among a variety of fields and actors, including schools, the media, community groups, museums, fairs and festivals. The Group also emphasized a relational approach to private and subordinated memories, noting that these are "composite constructions" that cannot be separated from what is public and dominant (Popular Memory Group 1982:78). This framework was a major influence on A. Thomson's study of Australian war veterans (1994) and has been further developed for the study of war memory and commemoration by Ashplant et al (2000), one of whom (Graham Dawson) was an original member of the Group.

32 "Anzac" refers to the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps that was formed during WWI. The term has occasionally been used in subsequent combined operations between Australian and New Zealand troops. While Australia also (like Canada) celebrates Remembrance Day on November 11, the most significant Australian day of war commemoration is Anzac Day on April 25, the anniversary of the start of the WWI Gallipoli campaign.

Thomson conducted extended interviews with Australian WWI veterans and examined their narratives in terms of different dimensions of composure. As mentioned earlier, I have found his notion of composure useful for my own work. At the time of my fieldwork, however, I was not clear as to how to apply the "key theoretical connection" that Thomson makes, as follows:

One key theoretical connection, and the link between the two senses of composure, is that the apparently private process of composing safe memories is in fact very public. Our memories are risky and painful if they do not conform with the public norms or versions of the past. We compose our memories so that they will fit with what is publicly acceptable (2003:301).

Thomson pursued this connection by conducting two sets of interviews with each veteran. The first round of interviews followed a "chronological life story approach" which familiarized Thomson with the men's stories; then in the second round, he focused on their relationships with the "public myth" or "Anzac legend", drawing on details he had learned from their stories to prompt the men for their thoughts about "war books and films" and "Anzac day and war memorials" (2003:301). My difficulty was that, during my fieldwork, I was uncertain how to identify (and therefore ask about) the "public myth". Thomson's work (as is the case with most work on war memory) related personal narratives to the legend, myth, or dominant memory of a specific battle (Gallipoli) and war (WWI).<sup>33</sup> In my case, there was no "legend of Ortona", as the

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33 The focus of war memory studies is usually limited to the contrasting and conflicting narratives around a specific war or battle. The most influential work on the social memory of war has focused on WWI (Fussell 1975; Mosse 1990; J. Winter 1995; Vance 1997). Other notable work includes Savage 1994 on the US Civil War; the papers in Fujitani et al. 2001 on WWII in the Pacific; papers in Cappelletto 2005 and in Noakes and Pattinson 2014 on WWII in Europe; Lembcke 1998, Gustafsson 2007 and Kwon 2008a on the American war in Vietnam; and the papers in Ashplant et al. 2000 that include wars in Argentina, South Africa and Portuguese Africa. Kapferer 1988 and Handelman and Katz 1990 are two exceptions; these focus on national war commemorations in terms of how commemorations of war-in-general (rather than specific wars) relate to national identity.

To be clear, the subject of my dissertation is not the social memory of Ortona, nor is it the social memory of WWII (although these are dimensions of my work). My focus is on the framing of war in general (or, more to the point, the framing of **national** wars-in-general). I analyse Canadian war remembrance not as social memory but

battle (at that time) was largely unknown to Canadians. I asked some questions in my interviews about what veterans thought about how WWII is remembered, but my questions were general and vague, and (as a consequence, I think) I received similarly vague, uninteresting answers. I needed to achieve a clearer understanding of the sacrificial frame of Remembrance before I could ask effective questions (see Field 1999:63); unfortunately, it took me a number of years to achieve that understanding, by which time I lacked the time and resources to return to western Canada to conduct further interviews.

Finally, before I could effectively analyse the interview transcripts for the "hidden forms of meaning" and "strategies of containment" (A. Thomson 1994:11, 2003:302), I needed to examine my own habits of emotional control. This self-examination through psychotherapy was unrelated to my research but it gave me insights and confidence to go beyond the surface or "lexical content" of my interview transcripts (see Ewing 2006:92). Confidence was particularly important in light of the infrequency of psychological interpretations in cultural anthropology (Ewing 1992, 2006; Strauss and Quinn 1997). In sum, the story of my research affirms Renato Rosaldo's point, regarding ethnographic fieldwork, that "all interpretations are provisional; they are made by positioned subjects who are prepared to know certain things and not others" (2004:170).

Rosaldo's point goes beyond the relatively familiar notion that, as he says, "ethnographers

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as a discourse – a set of signifying practices that applies as much to orientations to the present and the future as to the past. The aspect of my work that focuses on Remembrance is similar to Kapferer's study of Anzac Day, except that Kapferer focuses more on the performance of national identity in the ritual whereas I focus more on the sacrificial schema or frame that is promoted by the ritual discourse; in other words, my emphasis is on the framing of war whereas Kapferer's is the framing of nation (in terms of Australian egalitarian individualism – although Kapferer is also concerned with the role of violence in constituting national identity). Of the major work on war commemoration, Mosse's (1990) is nearest to my argument; although Mosse focuses on the memory of WWI in Western Europe, he argues that these inter-war commemorations promoted a "myth of the war experience". (Vance 1997 raises a similar point, but not as directly as Mosse.) In effect, although he does not use the term, Mosse regards war commemoration as a militarizing discourse, as he writes: "the attitudes toward politics, life, and death which the myth projected prepared many people to accept the inevitability of war" (181). Writing in 1990, he suggested that the discourse was in decline after WWII. I track its revitalization in Canada since the 1990s.

reposition themselves", that we "begin research with a set of questions, revise them throughout the course of inquiry, and in the end emerge with different questions" (170).<sup>34</sup> What Rosaldo adds to this notion is the role of life experience and self-understanding. In his case, his personal experience of loss affected his perspective on Illongot expressions of grief and rage; in my case, the effort to address some of my own "strategies of containment" through psychotherapy enhanced my ability to recognize and analyse moments of composure and its breakdown in my interview transcripts.

### **Decisions in Writing**

The chapters based on my interviews (Chapters 5 to 9) have been written in a style that is influenced by oral history, creative nonfiction, and dialogical ethnography. Much of the content of these chapters comprises relatively unedited passages from my interview transcripts. I have a number of reasons for writing in this manner. First and most important, I want to include the voices of the veterans in my ethnography. These are their stories – told, of course, in interaction with me, yet nevertheless stories about their personal experiences and told in their own individual manners. Partly out of respect for them, I want to allow them to be the narrators of the stories in my ethnography as much as possible. This is a humanizing and individualizing concern that is shared by many ethnographers, particularly those working in life history who often quote extensively from informants or respondents (e.g. Crapanzano 1980; Dwyer 1982). Sometimes

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34 Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) provide an apt description of the ethnographic research process as a form of disciplined improvisation, "a continual 'tacking back and forth' between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the plan and its execution, theoretical insights and surprising empirical discoveries" which entails "the taking of risks and the making of mistakes, rethinking and reordering one's questions and priorities" (183-184). This is very much an intersubjective process of being affected and challenged by others; in this way, ethnographic research can become an existential as well as an intellectual endeavour (see, among many possible examples, Crapanzano 1980 and Behar 2003).

these ethnographers are more like editors than authors, organizing the transcripts of their subjects' speech but imposing as little as possible on the narrative by way of analysis (e.g. Shostak 1981,1989). These ethnographies represent efforts to overcome the tendencies in anthropological theory and Western discourses that homogenize and essentialize minorities and non-Western peoples; the point is to bring into ethnography the genuine individuality of diverse peoples, the contingency of culture, and – in some ethnographies – the reality, complexity, and vulnerability of the ethnographic field encounter (Dwyer 1979,1982; Crapanzano 1980,1990; Fabian 1983; Abu-Lughod 1993). In my case, there is a more modest intention. Considering that my interview subjects were exclusively white Canadian men, my decision to include their voices extensively in my text was not motivated as strongly as it is in other ethnographic cases by concerns about power and representation. However, it is still the case that Canadian veterans have been essentialized and idealized as symbols of Remembrance – and, for all that veterans are celebrated, and for all that their organizations are a prominent force in Canadian society, we very rarely read direct, detailed, personal and emotional accounts of their combat experiences. Since I have collected a relatively rare type of personal narrative, I want to make these narratives available. Most of the veterans who told me these stories certainly hoped that I would share them, as they felt that such stories were rarely told or heard. Many of them told me that they were telling them for the first time.

Transcription is "a value-laden and disputed process" (Finnegan 1992:198). In my transcription method, I have edited the speech as little as possible. Spoken language is not as linear or neatly organized as writing; often, when it is transformed into writing, the writer or editor "corrects" it into standard written English so that it appears more confident or educated

(Slembrouck 1992:107-8; Bucholtz 2000:1452). I did not do this.<sup>35</sup> First of all, the pauses, the *ums* and *ahs*, false starts, repairs and hedges, are all potentially significant to an analysis of emotion in spoken narrative (cf. Finnegan 1992:197). They need to be included, not only to support my observations, but also so that my interpretations can be scrutinized by others who may be able to offer alternative or additional interpretations (as Ewing 2006 has reinterpreted some fieldwork observations by Mintz and Kondo).<sup>36</sup> Secondly, in attempting to preserve the character of the original spoken discourse, I am also attempting to provide the reader with a stronger experience of the living presence of the individual veterans, their personalities, their in-the-moment efforts to think and struggle with feeling. Samuel (2003) describes the quality of such transcription as "ragged at the edges; it twists and turns, gnaws away at meanings and coils itself up. There is a sense of a speaker thinking, wondering, and trying to answer the questions in his [or her] own mind" (391).<sup>37</sup> However, I have not followed the more comprehensive and systematic transcription methods of linguistic anthropology (see Duranti 1997) and ethnopoetics (e.g. Tedlock 1990) which aim to represent paralinguistic features of oral performance such as tone, amplitude and gesture. These transcription methods might have enhanced my analysis, but they would have been extremely time-consuming, considering the amount of original speech that I transcribed, and they would have made the narratives less accessible to a non-specialist audience (see Duranti 1997:142).<sup>38</sup> I decided that it was sufficient to use punctuation, ellipses,

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35 Neither for my respondents' speech, nor for my own. My own speech in the interviews is also characterised by fillers, hedges and repetitions, which are sometimes indicative of my struggle to make sense of the stories as I hear them, and sometimes indicative of my uncertainty about how to frame a question appropriately (or whether to ask it at all).

36 Dwyer (1982) expresses the same intention of opening his fieldwork dialogues to readers' interpretations.

37 For more on the variety of transcription styles in oral history, see Portelli 1997a:15-22. See Finnegan 1992:194-198 for a succinct review of transcription issues in anthropological methods.

38 "Since a transcript is going to be quite different depending on who is seen as its primary audience, we must make conscious and consistent choices. This does not mean that once we opt for one system we cannot change our mind later on. What is important is to follow a criterion that is consistent with our priorities and that can be

and standard orthography to convey the speakers' timing and pronunciation.<sup>39</sup>

As my ethnographic writing approach interweaves analysis with extensive transcription of spoken words, it is also characterised by occasional qualities of creative nonfiction. The latter is a genre of writing that aims to inform readers about real-world topics in a manner that includes a narrative voice and the sort of vivid descriptions traditionally more associated with creative writing than with academic prose (Narayan 2007; Behar 1999). Ethnographers have adopted this style with the intention of providing their audiences with a richer experience of the ethnographic subjects and field sites (Sharman 2007). In particular, creative narrative writing has a greater capacity to evoke thoughts and feelings that are tentative and open to interpretation. Beatty (2010) writes: "A narrative approach leaves opaque what resists social analysis; it acknowledges the irreducible; it does not force an answer" (438). I have employed this approach occasionally in Chapters 5 to 9 (my ethnographic chapters) in order to convey something of my fieldwork experience and my feelings that remain somewhat opaque yet compelling to me, such as the deer on my placemat at the restaurant with Sam, or the flares of the pumpjacks. These have potential meanings that I can guess at, yet I preferred to share them in a non-conclusive manner that evokes rather than explains. I have endeavoured to do so with a light touch. The evocation of my thoughts and sensations during fieldwork should engage readers without distracting them from the more important fact that I am presenting an analysis of narratives that is open to critical scrutiny, and without diverting attention from the veterans' narratives which are the primary

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understood by our readers. Thus, if we are concerned with the ability of native speakers and other people who know the language (especially other social scientists who do not have a linguistic training) to read our transcripts, we might opt for adapting standard orthography to our needs" (Duranti 1997:142).

39 I basically followed the practice of many oral historians described by Samuel: "Italics are used to indicate unexpected emphasis, punctuation to bring the phrases together rather than separate them, and occasional phonetic spellings to suggest the sound of the dialect" (2003:391). In addition to my fieldwork interviews, I also applied this transcription method to recordings from the University of Victoria Canadian Military Oral History Collection from which I quote in Chapter 4.

interest and contribution of these chapters (see Abu-Lughod 1993:23-24).

The dissertation proceeds in two parts. In the first part, from Chapters 2 to 4, I analyse and critique Canadian war remembrance as a discourse that promotes the sacrificial framing of war. In the second part, from Chapters 5 to 9, I analyse the ways in which veterans of Ortona struggle with thoughts and feelings about killing that transgress the frame. It is important to note that my analysis of veterans' narratives in the second part is not intended to be supporting evidence for my observations about Remembrance in the first. That is, my critical analysis of Canadian war remembrance does not invoke the authority of veterans. My perspective on Remembrance was influenced by my conversations with Ortona veterans, but this was my own interpretation of Remembrance, not theirs. First of all, I do not know how representative my respondents are of the total population of war veterans in Canada; secondly, I do not know how many of my respondents would even share my critical perspective. None of my respondents ever articulated a direct criticism of Canadian war remembrance. In any case, the opinions and feelings of veterans and soldiers should not dictate how Canadians discuss, remember, and debate the important political and moral issues of war and militarization.

My research shows that, despite the sacrificial framing of war, there were at least a small number of Canadian WWII veterans who remained troubled by the moral issue of killing. It is possible that these veterans who spoke to me are a tiny minority; it is also possible that present-day or future soldiers will not be troubled or affected by killing, due to their training, or changing cultural influences, or greater technological distance between combatants (see Robben 2013; Sluka 2013; Vasquez 2008). Nevertheless, even if not a single soldier experienced it or cared about it, one could still raise the moral concern about the negation or trivialization of killing in the public discourse on war; one could still argue that killing matters.

## Chapter Two: An Overview of Canadian War Remembrance

### **A Ritualized Discourse on War**

In Canada, there is a national holiday called Remembrance Day held every year on November 11. The emphasis of the holiday is on remembering the soldiers who have died in active military service for Canada. The holiday originates in the commemorative acts that followed the end of the First World War, and the date of the holiday coincides with the armistice that was signed on November 11, 1918. The symbol of Remembrance Day is the red poppy, which represents the deaths of soldiers. The significance of the poppy is attached to the poem "In Flanders Fields" which Canadians learn in school and hear recited every Remembrance Day. The poem, written by Canadian WWI soldier John McRae, speaks for the dead and suggests the duty of the living:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

At the time it was published in 1915, the poem was a call to continue the war until victory; if Canadians gave up the "quarrel with the foe", this would be a betrayal of the dead ("breaking faith"). Today, however, most Canadians do not notice the specific call to arms, and interpret the poem instead as expressing a basic duty to remember and honour the dead soldiers.<sup>1</sup> That duty is fulfilled by wearing poppies and participating in Remembrance Day events.

Across Canada on Remembrance Day, ceremonies are held at local war monuments. The ceremonies are timed to coincide with a moment of silence at 11 am, which is the time that the 1918 Armistice took effect. The largest Remembrance Day ceremony is at the National War Memorial in Ottawa, with tens of thousands in attendance.<sup>2</sup> With some local variations, the ceremonies in Ottawa and in communities across Canada follow a similar ritual order that is suggested by the Royal Canadian Legion, the largest war veterans organization in Canada, and by the federal government's Department of Veterans Affairs (see RCL n.d.a; VAC n.d.c.).<sup>3</sup>

In a typical ceremony, there is a parade to, or simply gathering at, the local war monument. The central figures are the war veterans, usually wearing the navy blue jackets and berets of the Legion. The processions might include current members of the Canadian armed forces in uniform; political leaders and other community leaders; and then other members of the public. Everyone in the procession wears an artificial plastic poppy pinned to the breast of their jacket or

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1 See Fussell 1975 and N. Holmes 2005 for analyses of the poem's literary and political characteristics. Holmes notes that Canadians tend to "forget" or avoid confronting the last stanza's militaristic meaning. The "quiet militarism" (Dupuis-Déri 2010b) of Canadian war remembrance is an important topic that will be raised later in this chapter.

2 In 2012 and 2013, more than 40,000 people attended (RCL 2014:18).

3 In this dissertation, I will often refer to the Royal Canadian Legion (RCL) more briefly as the Canadian Legion or the Legion. Similarly, I will refer to the Department of Veterans Affairs as Veterans Affairs or by the acronym VAC (short for Veterans Affairs Canada, the name by which the Department identifies itself on its website and in many of its publications).

coat. At major ceremonies, such as in Ottawa, soldiers in uniform stand vigil around the monument. When the procession arrives at the monument, a member of the procession will recite the poem "In Flanders Fields". There might be an address by a chaplain or community leader. The ritual proceeds when everyone recites in unison the following poetic declaration which is known as the Act of Remembrance:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.<sup>4</sup>

A bugler plays the Last Post, a melody that is traditionally played at the funeral of a dead soldier. Following the Last Post, the people who are assembled stand at attention for two minutes of silence. After two minutes, the silence is broken by the bugler playing Reveille.<sup>5</sup> The wreath ceremony follows. People walk forward in pairs or small groups to lay wreaths at the monument on behalf of the Queen, the government of Canada, the Canadian Forces, and the Legion. In the national ceremony in Ottawa, a wreath is also laid by the Silver Cross Mother, the mother of a dead soldier, who is chosen annually by the Legion to represent all mothers of the war dead. The ceremony concludes with the singing of the national anthem, O Canada.

Most Canadians do not participate directly in the ritual. In Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Nova Scotia, Remembrance Day is not a statutory holiday; if it falls on a weekday, it is a regular school and work day. At schools, there are assemblies that follow a format similar to the official

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4 This is the fourth stanza of the poem "For the Fallen" written by Laurence Binyon at the start of WWI in 1914.

5 Reveille is a bugle call used to wake soldiers at sunrise. In the Remembrance Day ceremony, it symbolises the resurrection or immortality of the dead soldiers.

ceremony (wearing of poppies; recitations of "In Flanders Fields"; readings by students; recital of the Act of Remembrance; moment of silence; singing of O Canada). Many workplaces observe a work-stoppage and moment of silence at 11am, and some workplaces also hold assemblies. The national ceremony is televised by the national broadcaster (CBC) with an audience in the millions. The most widespread form of participation is to wear a poppy on the day and during the days leading up to it.

Activities are not limited to the day of November 11. In the weeks prior to Remembrance Day, Legion members and cadets can be seen in public places accepting donations for manufactured plastic poppies that people are meant to wear on the breast of their coat or jacket. In schools, children memorize "In Flanders Fields" and do other activities that teachers can find in guides provided by the Legion and Veterans Affairs. The period before Remembrance Day, and particularly the preceding week known as Veterans Week, is considered a time for reflecting on war and telling war stories. Veterans are invited to speak in schools. Documentaries about war are shown on television; newspapers feature articles about war; and bookstores promote books on military history.

As such, while the main event of Remembrance Day is a ritual focused on the dead, the activities around the event also give prominence to living war veterans and to those presently serving in the Canadian military, and Remembrance Day activities raise the topic of war in general. Furthermore, while it is a calendrical event (see Connerton 1989), the associated symbols and practices appear throughout the year. Monuments are always present in the landscape, blending into the background of everyday life in between ritual occasions. The Canadian War Museum in Ottawa is designed to remind visitors of Remembrance; even passersby can see the prominent tower of the museum with its morse code symbols that signify

the words "Lest We Forget", a common refrain in Remembrance ceremonies and monuments.<sup>6</sup>

Highway 416, which connects Ottawa with the country's busiest highway (the 401), is called "Veterans Memorial Highway". The signs on Highway 416 feature poppies and the phrase "Lest We Forget". A further 170km stretch of Highway 401 between Trenton and Toronto is called "Highway of Heroes" and is signposted with poppies and the phrase "Support Our Troops".<sup>7</sup>

Thus, one can drive between Canada's largest city (Toronto) and the national capital (Ottawa) and for more than half the journey one will see poppies, reminders of veterans and reminders of presently serving soldiers. Remembrance themes are also routinely "signposted" on Canadian money. Poppies have been featured on the 25-cent coins issued in 2004, 2008 and 2010. The 25-cent coins issued in 2005 featured the Year of the Veteran. From 2001 to 2013, the 10 dollar bill featured the theme of "Remembrance and Peacekeeping" with images of poppies, the National War Memorial, soldiers, and a veteran in his Legion jacket accompanied by children, as well as the first verse of "In Flanders Fields". In 2012, a new 20 dollar bill was issued that features the Canadian National Vimy Memorial with poppies.<sup>8</sup>

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6 The design of the War Museum will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4. Of course, many passersby will not know the meaning of the morse code on the tower, but it is there to be flagged, whether by tour guides or by locals who know. For example, when I was on a bus in Ottawa asking the driver for directions, the driver made a point of telling me as we passed the War Museum that the symbols on the tower mean Lest We Forget. The phrase is taken from the poem "Recessional" by Rudyard Kipling (1897) and originally referred to imperial England's duty to be humble before God and remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: "Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet, / Lest we forget—lest we forget!" The phrase was added to war remembrance services and placed on monuments throughout the British Empire following World War One. It is often spoken in unison in Legion ceremonies following the recitation of the Act of Remembrance.

7 The naming of this stretch of highway derives from citizens' initiatives to honour Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan. During the Afghan mission from 2002 to 2013, the bodies of killed soldiers were flown into Canadian Forces Base Trenton and then driven in a motorcade to the Office of the Chief Coroner in Toronto. Small crowds began to gather on highway overpasses to salute "the fallen" as the motorcade went by. These activities increased in 2006 with the intensification of Canadian combat operations. In 2007, in response to a petition by citizens, the Ontario provincial government introduced the designation "Highway of Heroes". See Managhan 2012; McCready 2012.

8 Descriptions of the designs of Canadian currency can be found at the website of the Royal Canadian Mint ([www.mint.ca](http://www.mint.ca)). The Vimy Memorial, located in Vimy, France, is a memorial to all Canadian soldiers who died in the First World War. The restoration of the Vimy Memorial and the revival of interest in the Battle of Vimy Ridge will be discussed later in this chapter.

Remembrance, therefore, is more than a ritual, and it is more than a commemoration of the war dead. In this chapter, I will examine Remembrance as a ritualized discourse on war. By discourse, I mean more than language; I am using the term discourse as it has been expanded by some scholars to encompass a range of both verbal and non-verbal signifying practices including visual and audio media, physical structures, and bodily practices (see Hall 1997).<sup>9</sup> In the case of Remembrance, these practices include painting, architecture, monuments, ritual, and school classroom activities. In saying that this discourse is ritualized, I mean that it is anchored in a ritual, in the sense that its signifying practices beyond the ritual derive added social authority and affective force from their ritual associations.<sup>10</sup> In particular, I will argue that Remembrance

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9 For linguistic anthropologists and other scholars of language, discourse usually refers very simply to any passage of speech or text that is coherent to a group of people (see for example Duranti 1997; Gee 2008). In this dissertation, when I am not referring specifically to Remembrance, I will use the term discourse in this basic linguistic sense. Among many non-linguistic anthropologists, however, the term discourse has come to mean something more specific: a set of signifying practices that establishes a "grid of intelligibility" (Foucault 1990:93) which at once limits and facilitates what is possible to know and to say. This usage of the term derives from the work of Michel Foucault. Although Foucault rarely applied the term to non-verbal practices, cultural anthropologists inspired by Foucault have extended its meaning as such. Unfortunately, the term is often used very loosely among anthropologists (sometimes even within the same text) to refer to: a set of practices; the "grid of intelligibility" that the practices establish; and a passage of speech or text in the purely linguistic sense. This range of uses can lead to confusion and lack of analytic precision. I would prefer to limit the term discourse to its basic linguistic meaning, and find a different term for a set of signifying practices. The problem is that we do not seem to have a satisfying alternative word in English that could be a shorthand for "set of signifying practices". Frequent use of "set of signifying practices" would be cumbersome. What could replace it? In the past, anthropologists routinely used the terms "tradition" and "custom" which were vague enough to include language as well as ritual and other associated activities. I considered using the term "tradition" for Remembrance; however, there is a politics associated with this term – cultural phenomena that are designated traditional tend to be granted more legitimacy – that I wanted to avoid (as my purpose is to question and de-naturalize Remembrance). I also wanted to avoid the binary opposition between tradition and modernity, as Remembrance is clearly a modern phenomenon. I considered simply using the term "practice", but unfortunately that word sounds very singular in a way that discourse does not; when we say "a practice" it sounds as if we are referring to only one thing, whereas saying "a discourse" has the ring of something that is somehow unified yet multiple (perhaps because of the term's association with language-in-use). In the end, I settled on the term "discourse" even though it has the consequence that I will be using the term in two different ways. As for the other common anthropological use of discourse to refer to a "grid of intelligibility", this is covered by the concepts of schema and frame that I will explain later in this chapter and use accordingly throughout the dissertation. The idea for anthropologists to use discourse to refer to material practices and schema to refer to embodied mental structures (which I take to be emotional as well) is suggested by Holland and Cole (1995).

10 The definition of ritual has long been an issue in anthropology (Kapferer 2005). I find Bell's definition a good starting point: ritual is "a way of acting that distinguishes itself from other ways of acting in the very way it does what it does; moreover, it makes this distinction for specific purposes" (Bell 1997:81). Lukes defines ritual as "rule-governed activity of a symbolic character which draws the attention of its participants to objects of thought

promotes the sacrificial framing of war.<sup>11</sup> Before proceeding with that argument, however, I will discuss the production of Remembrance, starting with a brief history of its origins followed by an examination of its revitalization since the 1990s.

### **A Brief History of Remembrance**

Remembrance was originally focused on the commemoration of a single war, the Great War or what later became known (after the Second) as World War One. The major symbols and practices of Remembrance came together during and after WWI in a process that spanned the British Dominions with initiatives by citizens as well as by states. For example, the observance of a two-

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and feeling which they hold to be of special significance" (1975:291). Notice that both Bell and Lukes emphasize ritual's function for making distinctions and drawing attention; in this view, ritual is (but is not only) an attention-getting device. Furthermore, ritual is characterised by a formalization of speech and bodily performance. Bloch (1989) notes that in ritual activities there are stronger than usual constraints on syntax, rules about who may speak, and prescriptions and limitations for what may be said. Connerton (1989) notes the importance of "prescribed bodily behaviour" (72) that organizes a kind of "choreography of authority" and other social relations and attitudes that are "expressed through the body" (74). The ceremonies on Remembrance Day share these characteristics of formalized and authoritative bodily performance and language, and, as I will argue later, these are features that give the ritual an added power to inculcate what Connerton calls "attitudes" (58) and I will call schemas and frames. Here, I should note that the main producers of Remembrance in Canada (the Legion and Veterans Affairs) do not use the term "ritual". The preferred term is "ceremony". This preference may be due to popular associations of ritual with religion and with irrational behaviour. Alternatively, the preference for the term ceremony may stem from an idea that a ritual is supposed to accomplish a change of state or identity, something that Remembrance does not (self-consciously) do. Indeed, anthropologists have distinguished between rituals that aim at transforming states or identities (e.g. Handelman 1990:49; Kapferer 2005; Kapferer 1988:163-164) and rituals that are "events that present", that "provide symbolic acknowledgement and demonstration" (Firth quoted in Handelman 1990:41). Commemorative rituals (Connerton 1989) and the "political rituals" of modern states (Kertzer 1988) would usually fit into the latter category.

11 A note on my use of the term "promotes": It is common in anthropology to say that rituals and other practices inculcate attitudes or schemas (e.g. Kertzer 1988). The term "inculcate" implies that the practices in question are actually successful in shaping people's subjectivities. However, my research on Remembrance focused almost exclusively on the discourse, not on its reception. While I have the impression that most Canadians have indeed internalized the sacrificial frame, and I have some evidence to support that impression, I believe that the reception of Remembrance is more complex than I am able to report here. I agree with Linger when he suggests we be careful not to infer "subjective patterns from concrete, readily observable, highly public material" (Linger 2005:50). (As an example of inferring too much subjectivity from public representations, Linger cites Geertz's essay on the Balinese cockfight.) Most of my material on Remembrance consists of public representations, which Linger suggests are "best regarded as proposals, or skeletal formations, of meaning" (16). Given its authority, moral appeals and sanctions, Remembrance is much more forceful than a proposal, so I have settled on the term "promotes".

minute silence on the anniversary of the Armistice (November 11) seems to have originated in a local wartime observance in Cape Town, was recommended to the British Cabinet after the war by a South African industrialist, and was embraced across the Empire following a royal "request" by King George V in 1919 (Chadwick 1976:323-325; Gregory 1994:9; Djebabla-Brun 2004:30-37).<sup>12</sup> The original day to commemorate the Great War was called Armistice Day and was observed throughout the Empire, although it was not official in Canada until 1921 (Vance 1997:211). In 1931, after lobbying by veterans' groups and other citizens, the Canadian government renamed the holiday Remembrance Day and fixed the date to November 11 (Vance 1997:213).<sup>13</sup> As for the poppy, this flower had already been a popular symbol during the war, used by governments in recruitment and war bond posters after it had been popularized across the British Dominions and in the United States by McRae's poem.<sup>14</sup> The use of artificial poppies for fundraising was initiated by women working for charitable organizations; in 1921, they convinced the newly formed British Legion and the Canadian Great War Veterans Association

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12 The Johannesburg industrialist Sir Percy Fitzpatrick had used his influence to promote the "Noon Pause" in South Africa starting in 1916. At noon every day throughout South Africa, all work was to pause for three minutes to honour the war dead. The intention behind the Noon Pause was to unify South Africans behind the war effort. Following the end of the war, Fitzpatrick proposed "the Silence" to the British Cabinet as "a kind of spiritual transmission belt for holding the empire together behind memory of a war for civilization" (Nasson 2004:10). The imperial purpose of the Silence was not lost on French Quebecers, and in some parts of Montreal in 1919 the Armistice Day Silence was not observed (Djebabla-Brun 2004:31).

13 Previously, the official Armistice Day had always been on the Monday of the week of November 11 and coincided with Thanksgiving. According to Vance, the pressure on government to create a more exclusive holiday came from 'an alliance of veterans, women's groups, political clubs, and municipalities' (1997:213). The name change from Armistice to Remembrance, also served to shift the emphasis away from the political act of ending the war (the Armistice) onto the duty to honour the soldiers (D. Thomson 1995:10-11). Djebabla-Brun (2004:85-88) notes that this felt duty coincided with the 1931 Statute of Westminster in which Canada gained more independence from Britain; he suggests that the stronger focus on the Great War veterans fulfilled the search for distinct national symbols and exemplars at this time.

14 Examples of such posters are displayed in the Canadian War Museum; see also Vance 1997:200. "In Flanders Fields" was published anonymously in *Punch* magazine on December 8, 1915. Fussell (1975:247-253) notes the pre-war meanings of the poppy in English culture (it was a symbol of forgetfulness and homoerotic love; see Iles 2008 for an excellent social history of the symbol). N. Holmes (2005:16) notes that the poppy and "In Flanders Fields" were used by Canadian Prime Minister Borden in his successful 1917 reelection campaign.

(GWVA) that the poppy was an ideal symbol and fundraising device for veterans.<sup>15</sup> The first poppy campaign in Canada was conducted by the GWVA on Armistice Day in 1921, raising funds for struggling veterans and their families. In 1925, the GWVA joined with other Canadian veterans organizations to form the Canadian Legion, and the Legion inherited the poppy campaign (Gregory 1994:99; MacGregor 2009; CWM n.d.e.). Orders of service for Armistice Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies were designed by volunteer organizations and the Canadian Legion (Vance 1997:212-213). Monuments were constructed mostly as local initiatives in communities across Canada (Vance 1997:202-211) while the Canadian state commissioned the National War Memorial in Ottawa as well as the National Vimy Memorial in France.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, across the British Empire, governments agreed to share a common burial policy for dead soldiers; the Imperial (later Commonwealth) War Graves Commission was created to organize the reburial of the dead from their temporary wartime graves into cemeteries near the battlefields, with uniformly-shaped headstones for all soldiers (on which the families of dead soldiers could personalize their religious symbols and inscriptions) and a common design for all

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15 The idea to use artificial poppies for fundraising seems to have originated with an American woman, Moira Michael, working at the YMCA Overseas Secretaries Headquarters in New York. Inspired by the poem "In Flanders Fields", Michael convinced the American Legion to adopt the poppy as its symbol of remembrance in 1920. Anne Guérin, founder of the American and French Children's League, was present at that American Legion convention and had the idea that war-affected women and children in France could manufacture poppies to raise funds for French women, children and veterans. In 1921, Guérin and representatives of her organization took her proposal to the major veterans organizations in Britain, Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. While Guérin succeeded in convincing these veterans groups of the poppy's fundraising potential, the manufacture of the poppies shifted promptly from French women and children to the disabled veterans of each nation. (One wonders what Guérin thought of this development and what it meant for her organization.) From 1922 until 1996, Canadian poppies were manufactured by disabled veterans. Since 1996, poppies have been manufactured by private companies under contract to the Legion. See MacGregor 2009; Iles 2008; Legg, Parker and Legg n.d.

16 There were proposals to establish central control of monuments to standardize them across Canada, but the idea was unpopular and was abandoned (Vance 1997:203). Vance observes that most monuments were community initiatives that included members of city councils, clubs, and women's organizations. On the construction of the national monuments, see D. Gordon and Osborne 2004; Bormanis 2010; Lermite 2010; Vance 1997. The Vimy Memorial was completed in 1936; the National War Memorial was not completed until 1939.

cemeteries (Longworth 1967; Wood and Swettenham 1974; Laqueur 1994; Vance 1997:60-66).<sup>17</sup>

While a few scholars have studied the formation and practice of Canadian Remembrance from its inception up to the Second World War, very little academic work has been published on the post-WWII history of the discourse.<sup>18</sup> Generally, the mood of Canadians during and immediately after WWII was that any new memorials should be "useful" and not specific

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17 Studies of war commemoration (including this dissertation) have tended to focus on nations rather than the connections between them. This is understandable given the focus of commemorative discourses on the nation-state, but the previous paragraph on the Canadian case suggests the value – at least regarding the former British Empire – of a study of the "roots" of the discourse in transnational "routes". Some scholars (e.g. Davies 1993, J. Winter 1995) have adopted a pan-European perspective on remembrance. Davies (1993) suggests that war memorials are a "common European cultural 'lapidary text'" (113) and "where comprehension of these memorials ends, so does 'Europe'" (122). I suggest an alternative investigation of war commemoration as a shared language of the contemporary Anglosphere. Not only did major symbols and texts of commemoration (the poppy, "In Flanders Fields") originally develop in exchanges across the British Dominions and the USA, but there are signs that the mutual influences have continued in the recent revitalization of the discourse (which I will discuss shortly). Reed (1999) notes that the "Canada Remembers" program of war remembrance (developed to commemorate WWII in 1995 – see Appendix) was the model for Australia's program, "Australia Remembers", which in turn was the model for New Zealand's program, "New Zealand Remembers". In the opposite direction, the Australian decision to create their own monument to the Unknown Soldier in 1993 may have influenced the Canadian decision to do the same in 2000. The Canadian Legion's successful 1999 initiative to revive the two-minute silence on Remembrance Day was preceded by the British revival in 1996. The intensification of Australians' interest in their WWI Battle of Gallipoli has basically coincided with the Canadian revival of interest in Vimy Ridge, and many of the pilgrimage practices appear to be the same. For more on these points, see my notes later in this chapter on militarization and pilgrimage.

18 War commemoration in Canada has been studied mostly in terms of the social memory of the Great War during the inter-war period; see Alan Young 1989; D. Thomson 1995; Vance 1997; Djebabla-Brun 2004; and Evans 2007. Shipley (1987) provides an account of war commemoration in 19th century Canada (see also Maroney 1998; Johnston and Ripmeester 2007) before moving on to focus on the construction of Great War monuments and their continued use after WWII. On Great War commemoration in Newfoundland, which was a separate Dominion until 1949, see Harding 2006. Djebabla-Brun (2004) provides the most chronologically thorough history of Remembrance, tracking its political role in Quebec from its inception in WWI through to 1998. Evans (2007) focuses on Great War discourses that framed Canadian women as "mothers of martyrs" and suggests continuities with the expected wartime roles of women in contemporary Islamic societies; she also notes the continuing symbolic significance of the mothers of dead soldiers in Canadian Remembrance Day ceremonies during the war in Afghanistan (see also Cornut and Turenne-Sjolander 2013). Various elements of Remembrance discourse have been studied in relative isolation. On the mythology of Vimy Ridge (which I discuss later in this chapter), see D. Inglis 1995 and Lermite 2010. On the National War Memorial, see D. Gordon and Osborne 2004, Bormanis 2010 and Szpunar 2010. On the Peacekeeping Monument, see Gough 2002. On Canadian War Museum controversies, exhibits and new design features, see A. Beattie 2011; Brandon 2003, 2007; Dean 2009; Greenberg 2008; Innes 2008; Robertson 2001; Rukszto 2008; and Sarty 2007. On new Remembrance practices that have developed during the war in Afghanistan, see Innes 2008; Managhan 2012; McCready 2010, 2012; and McKay and Swift 2012. These latter are concerned with the militarization of Canadian society, but (with the exception of McKay and Swift) do not apply that perspective to the "traditional" forms of Remembrance. Indeed, the significance of the ritual aspects of Remembrance has barely been noted in work on Canadian war memory. In terms of the "liturgy" of Remembrance, N. Holmes (2005) provides a strong literary, cultural and political critique of the poem "In Flanders Fields". Cornut and Turenne-Sjolander (2013) analyse the role of the Silver

reminders of war. In her study that is otherwise focused on the interwar formation of Canadian war commemoration, Denise Thomson (1995:23) cites a 1944 Gallup poll that "showed that 90 per cent of those responding thought that tribute to the war dead would be most suitably expressed in the forms of playgrounds, hospitals, schools, and the like" (23). Thomson goes on to observe: "Canadians after 1945 did not want to dwell on what had happened to them, but wanted to turn their attention forward to a new world unmarked by rationing and scarcity which had characterized not only the war years but those of the Great Depression" (23; see also Vance 2012).<sup>19</sup> In the same spirit, Prime Minister Mackenzie King proposed in 1944 that the best national memorial to the Second World War would be, not a new monument, but rather the urban renewal and redevelopment of the National Capital "as a memorial to the service and sacrifice of men and women who have participated in the present war, a capital city which would be a model to other cities and other countries" (quoted in D. Gordon and Osborne 2004:633). Across Canada, new buildings, parks, and streets were created after the war, but there was little interest in creating new monuments whose only function would be to commemorate; in most cases, references to WWII were merely added onto the existing monuments to the Great War (in some cases, such as the National War Memorial, merely inscribing the years, 1939-45) thus transforming them into monuments to both wars.<sup>20</sup> This began a process whereby the practices of

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Cross Mother in Remembrance Day ceremonies. Local ceremonies of Remembrance Day have been studied in Newfoundland (Machin 2006) and in a Stó:ló First Nation in British Columbia (Lobenski 1995) but these have focused mainly on the ceremony's importance to local identities. Considering the very strong Remembrance emphasis on youth, its pedagogical dimension is also very understudied; see Carr 2003 for a critique of Remembrance themes in the history curriculum, and Matthews 2009 on youth in the War Museum.

19 Cannadine (1981) notes the same sentiment in post-WWII Britain and connects it with the "welfare-state ethos of the post-war world" (233; see also Mosse 1990:221). If this is so, then it raises the possibility that the recent revitalization of war commemoration has something to do with a decline in that ethos. In post-WWII USA, there was likewise a preference for creating "living memorials" such as parks, hospitals and libraries (Doss 2008:231).

20 A prime indication of this post-WWII lack of commemorative enthusiasm is the fact that the years 1939-1945 were not inscribed on the National War Memorial until 1982 (Vance 2012:467).

commemorating the First World War turned into practices of commemorating **all** of Canada's wars. In the decades following WWII, ceremonies continued to be held on Remembrance Day bringing together veterans from both wars, later joined by veterans of the Korean War.

By the 1990s, scholars were observing or predicting the decline of war commemoration across the West, and there were observations of declining interest in Remembrance in Canada.<sup>21</sup> However, since the mid-1990s, Canadian Remembrance has experienced a revitalization, with the intensification of existing practices and the production of new ones. In order to understand this revitalization, it is useful first to survey the major contemporary producers of Remembrance.

### **The Main Producers of Remembrance**

The main producers of Remembrance today are the Canadian Legion and the Department of Veterans Affairs. A number of non-governmental organizations also play significant roles in the production of the discourse.

The Canadian Legion is Canada's largest and most authoritative veterans organization. It holds a trademark on the red poppy symbol, and it organizes the annual Poppy Campaign. The

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21 In his study of the myth of Vimy Ridge from 1917-1992, D. Inglis (1995:120 n.283) observed the "steady decline in the relevance of Remembrance Day to Canadians" since the Second World War. Regarding attendance at the national Remembrance Day Ceremony, CBC news anchor Peter Mansbridge remarked: "We seemed to go through a period there in the '60s, '70s and '80s where the crowds really thinned" (MacDonald 2013). In her study of how a Newfoundland regiment celebrated Remembrance Day in 1992, Machin (2006) noted that, in the opinion of her research participants, the public's interest and participation in the holiday were declining (101). From a British perspective, Chadwick, writing in 1976, observed that interest in war commemoration in Britain had declined since WWII, and predicted its demise (Chadwick 1976:328). Poppy sales for the British Legion were stagnant through the 1950s and 60s (Cannadine 1981:235). The post-WWII decline and subsequent revival of war commemoration seems to have occurred in many Western societies, especially the Anglosphere. J. Winter (1995) suggested that "The Second World War helped to put an end to the rich set of traditional languages of commemoration which flourished after the Great War" (9) but then 11 years later, he observed the revival of commemoration in Western Europe (J. Winter 2006). In the USA, Doss (2008) observes a post-WWII decline in war commemoration (to the point that New York cancelled its 1994 and 1995 Memorial Day parades) followed by a "boom" since the mid-1990s. K.S. Inglis (2005) observes the same pattern in Australia.

Legion is also the organizer of the national Remembrance Day Ceremony in Ottawa that is televised across Canada by the national broadcaster (the CBC). The Legion produces a Teacher's Guide for Remembrance activities (RCL 2008) and holds an annual set of Literary and Poster Remembrance Contests that are very popular in Canadian schools.<sup>22</sup> The winning essays, poems and posters from the contests are displayed in the Canadian War Museum year-round; second-place entries are displayed in the foyer of the House of Commons; and senior-grade contest winners are invited and sponsored to visit Ottawa on November 11 to represent the youth of Canada at the Remembrance Day Ceremony. The authority of the Legion as a representative of war veterans and custodian of Canadian war memory is accepted and supported by the Canadian state; for example, the central gallery in the Canadian War Museum (which is a Crown corporation) is named the Royal Canadian Legion Hall of Honour, and the "Remembrance and Peacekeeping" 10 dollar bill features a veteran wearing the distinctive Legion uniform of a navy jacket and beret. Indeed, that uniform is **how we know** he is a veteran. When Canadians think of war veterans, we think of the Legion.<sup>23</sup>

The Canadian state promotes Remembrance largely through the Canada Remembers Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VAC). The Canada Remembers Program produces Remembrance materials for schools (including print and online resources), gives

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22 The Legion reports that the contest participation rate from 2008 to 2013 has consistently exceeded 100,000 students per year (RCL 2010:6; RCL 2014:18).

23 It is unclear how representative the Legion is (and has been) of the total population of Canadian war veterans. By comparison, only one-tenth of British WWI veterans joined the British Legion (King 1998:221), a lack of enthusiasm which D. Lloyd (1998:37) attributes to the British Legion's perceived alignment with upper-class values. Similarly, no more than a quarter of American WWI veterans joined the American Legion, which also struggled to gain sufficient enrolment in its 1927 pilgrimage to the war graves and battlefields (Budreau 2010:167,177). These cases are not necessarily indicative of Legion membership in Canada in the post-WWII period but they do suggest the need to be careful about equating the Legion with war veterans in general. There is an official history of the Canadian Legion (Hale 1995) and the Legion is discussed in Morton and Wright's (1987) study of Canadian veterans' social movements in the interwar years, but neither work provides membership information.

financial support to community Remembrance activities (including monument construction and restoration), and organizes pilgrimages for veterans and youth to visit overseas Canadian war cemeteries and battlefields. In 2002, the Canadian government adopted a Remembrance Policy in which it pledges to "engage citizens" in "acts of remembrance", "support the preservation" of "memorials and monuments", and "support remembrance through public information and research" with particular focus on young Canadians (VAC 2004a:123). In addition to the work of VAC, the Canadian state also promotes Remembrance through other departments, such as Heritage Canada, and through Crown corporations such as the War Museum and the Royal Canadian Mint.

Two major non-governmental organizations play a significant role in promoting Remembrance: Historica Canada, and the Vimy Foundation. Both are charitable organizations that receive financial support from the Canadian state (specifically, from Veterans Affairs and Heritage Canada) as well as corporate donations.

Historica Canada has a mission to promote "Canadian identity and citizenship". The institute has a major focus on military history: through its Memory Project program, it trains and sends veterans to speak to schoolchildren about their war experiences; it maintains and continues to build an online archive of veterans' war stories; and it provides teachers' guides and materials for classroom activities on topics of war. Historica runs the country's largest youth forum, Encounters with Canada, which offers one-week residential programs in Ottawa throughout the school year on themes of Canadian culture with the aim of fostering Canadian unity and civic spirit among youth. In partnership with VAC, one of the programs of Historica's Encounters with Canada is on the theme of Canada Remembers, which is offered twice a year around Remembrance Day. Furthermore, Encounters with Canada includes a Remembrance-themed

module in all of its other programs.<sup>24</sup>

While Historica has a mission that includes but is not limited to Remembrance, the Vimy Foundation is exclusively focused on war commemoration. In particular, the Vimy Foundation's mission is to promote the idea, especially among youth, that the WWI Battle of Vimy Ridge was the "birth" of the Canadian nation. The Vimy Foundation provides materials on Vimy to schools, funds WWI battlefield educational tours for youth, and lobbies the federal government to further promote this particular interpretation of the battle. The Foundation runs a one-week "Vimy: Birth of a Nation" youth program together with Historica's Encounters with Canada.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Millennial Revitalization of Remembrance**

While the Legion and the state have been engaged in Remembrance since its inception, many of the practices just described above are recent developments. A revitalization of Remembrance began in the mid-1990s. One indicator of this revitalization is the increased participation in the national Remembrance Day Ceremony. From 1993 to 2003, attendance at the ceremony tripled from 8,000 to 25,000, and the CBC television audience increased from 750,000 to 2,000,000 (Valpy 2009).

This time period was characterized by Canadians' growing interest in WWII and the Holocaust.<sup>26</sup> In this context, the Legion became more assertive in defending or promoting particular ways of remembering the war. From 1993 to 1994, the Legion challenged the CBC

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24 See the websites of Historica ([www.historicacanada.ca](http://www.historicacanada.ca)) and Encounters with Canada ([www.ewc-rdc.ca](http://www.ewc-rdc.ca)). Historica Canada, previously known as The Historica-Dominion Institute, was formed in 2009 as a merger of two previously existing organizations: The Historica Foundation (founded in 1999) and The Dominion Institute (founded in 1997). Encounters with Canada has existed since 1982; it was purchased by The Historica Foundation in 2006.

25 See the website of the Vimy Foundation ([www.vimyfoundation.ca](http://www.vimyfoundation.ca)). The Foundation was established in 2005.

26 The following is an overview. A closer examination of the topics in this paragraph is provided in the next section.

documentary *The Valour and the Horror* over the documentary's negative interpretations of the Canadian military experience in WWII, particularly the documentary's criticisms of the Allied bombing campaign against Germany. In 1998, the Legion challenged the Canadian War Museum over its proposal to add a Holocaust gallery, which the Legion argued was a misdirection of funds from the museum's mandate to focus on Canada's military history and experiences of Canadian soldiers (a mandate which the Legion argued was already being poorly served). Both interventions resulted in Senate hearings that received a great deal of media attention and produced favourable outcomes for the Legion. Meanwhile, during these years, the Canadian military was deployed in roles that shifted from peacekeeping to combat operations, starting with peacekeeping in the former Yugoslavia (1992-2004), then "peace-making" in Somalia (1992-1995), then combat missions in NATO's air war against Serbia (1999), and finally the significant deployment of ground troops in counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2013.

In the Appendix, I provide a partial chronology of Remembrance initiatives by the Canadian state, the Canadian Legion, other levels of government, and non-governmental organizations since 1994. This chronology illustrates the millennial revitalization of Remembrance and introduces some of the Remembrance practices that will be mentioned and analysed later in this and other chapters. Major developments from 1994 to 2012 include the introduction of Veterans Week in 1995; restoration of the two-minute silence in 1999; construction of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in 2000; the *Canvas of War* art exhibit that toured Canada from 2000 to 2005; formalization of the Government of Canada Remembrance Policy and Youth Strategy in 2002; opening of the new War Museum building in 2005; rededication of the Vimy Memorial and youth pilgrimage in 2007; and introduction of the Vimy-themed 20 dollar bill in 2012. The Canadian state's commitment to Remembrance during this

time period is reflected in the increases in the actual spending of the Canada Remembers Program since 2000:<sup>27</sup>

| <b>Year</b> | <b>Actual Spending<br/>(in millions)</b> |
|-------------|--|
| 2000-2001   | \$27                                     |
| 2001-2002   | \$29                                     |
| 2002-2003   | \$36.6                                   |
| 2003-2004   | \$41.2                                   |
| 2004-2005   | \$48                                     |
| 2005-2006   | \$66.1                                   |
| 2006-2007   | \$59.6                                   |
| 2007-2008   | \$48                                     |
| 2008-2009   | \$45                                     |
| 2009-2010   | \$38.9                                   |
| 2010-2011   | \$40.6                                   |
| 2011-2012   | \$42.8                                   |
| 2012-2013   | \$43                                     |

All of this activity by the major producers of Remembrance clearly had widespread appeal among Canadians. The number of people in attendance at the National Remembrance Day Ceremony in 1993 was 8,000; in 2003, it was 25,000; in 2013, it was 40,000 (Valpy 2009; RCL 2014:18). The television audience for the Ceremony increased from 750,000 in 1993 to 3.4 million in 2011 (Valpy 2009; CBC 2012). The Legion reported increasing demand for poppies beginning in 1995, with the sharpest increase coming with the start of the war in Afghanistan in

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<sup>27</sup> The actual spending of the Canada Remembers Program (which was called the Commemoration Program prior to 2003) is published annually in Performance Reports of the Department of Veterans Affairs (see VAC 2001-2013).

2001 (Allick 2011).<sup>28</sup> In 2010, VAC distributed 4 million learning kits to schools, an increase of 70% over the previous two years, with a 98% teacher satisfaction rate (Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs 2011:3). Visits to VAC's Remembrance-themed website pages (many of which are activities for youth) increased from approximately 900,000 in 2005 to 1.7 million in 2006 and 2.3 million in 2007 (VAC 2007:17, 2009:27).

In a survey of Canadians conducted for Veterans Affairs in 2010, 97% of respondents said that it is important (and 74% said it is **very** important) that Canadians "recognize and remember Canada's veterans for their accomplishments and the sacrifices they made for their country" (Phoenix 2010:i). Another survey for VAC in 2011 found that there had been a "gradual, unbroken trend since 2002" in the percentage of respondents who think that Veterans Week is important; in 2011, that number was 85%, with 65% rating Veterans Week as **very** important (Phoenix 2011:vi,6). 69% of Canadians surveyed said they have a more positive perception of businesses that participate or show commitment to Remembrance (Phoenix 2010:16). 45% of Canadians surveyed had watched the 2011 National Remembrance Day Ceremony on television (a number that had ranged between 50-55% in surveys from 2002 to 2010) (Phoenix 2011:24). 79% of youth surveyed said they had participated in Remembrance activities at school; 94% of youth rated these activities important, with 55% of youth rating Remembrance activities very important (Phoenix 2010:ii). Overall, the 2011 survey found a high Remembrance participation rate of 73% among respondents, where participation could take the form of wearing a poppy, attending events on Remembrance Day or during Veterans Week, watching the national ceremony

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<sup>28</sup> I have been unable to gather data on poppy distribution prior to 2008. From 2008 to 2013, the national distribution of lapel poppies has ranged from 15 million to 18 million. In 2013, more than 16 million poppies were distributed (RCL 2012:8, 2014:17). The population of Canada in 2013 was approximately 35 million (see the website of Statistics Canada, [www.statcan.gc.ca](http://www.statcan.gc.ca)).

on television, or participating in school activities. Of those who did not participate, most (42%) said it was because they were too busy. Only 4% of respondents expressed any opposition to Remembrance (Phoenix 2011:17).

Importantly, Remembrance is less popular among Quebecers, Francophones, and citizens who were not born in Canada. Respondents born in Canada were more likely to have attended a Remembrance Day ceremony (39%) than those not born in Canada (22%) (Phoenix 2010:24). Even though awareness of the Canadian state's Remembrance initiatives was actually higher among Quebec respondents than among other Canadians, the participation rate in Remembrance activities was much lower among Quebecers: 53%, compared with 79% for the rest of Canada (Phoenix 2011:17). When Quebec respondents were asked to explain this difference, their most common answer was that Quebecers are more pacifist and less interested in war than other Canadians (Phoenix 2011:vi).

Canadian Remembrance has clearly been revitalized since the mid-1990s. However, the discourse seems to have more importance to Canadian-born Anglophones than to other Canadians, particularly Quebecers (Djebabla-Brun 2004).<sup>29</sup> There may be other regional, gender

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<sup>29</sup> For many Quebecers, the memory of WWI in particular is a memory of forced conscription to fight in an imperial war (Djebabla-Brun 2004) and there is a stronger and more critical memory among Quebecers of how the Canadian military has been used at points in our history (from the Northwest Rebellions to WWI conscription and the 1970 FLQ crisis) to suppress political dissent (Dupuis-Déri 2010a). Quebec sovereigntists are also attuned to the political use of Remembrance to promote national unity. When Prime Minister Chrétien used the anniversary of D-Day in 1994 to suggest that the soldiers in the Normandy cemeteries had died "as Canadians", the leader of the sovereigntist Bloc Québécois (Lucien Bouchard) declared, "It is not for anyone else to say what they thought when they died on those beaches far away from their families" (Copp and Symes 2014:147). Bouchard was interpreted by most Anglo-Canadians as merely making a partisan point in defence of Quebec "separatism" but in fact Bouchard raised an issue of principle in terms of how we presume to speak for the dead who may have had other intentions and values. For example, when I visited the Canadian war cemetery at Montecassino, I noticed that on the gravestone of Private A.E. Harris of the Seaforth Highlanders, who died on 23rd May 1944, there is the inscription: "Died that fascism be destroyed and that workers might build a new world." Presumably, Harris would not have said that he fought (and died) first and foremost for Canadian unity; he may have loved his country, but did not necessarily love it above all other political interests. Meanwhile, Djebabla-Brun (2004:117-127) suggests that Quebec sovereigntists have also discovered the political value of honouring the war dead as a means of emphasizing Quebecers' willingness to participate as a nation in matters of international importance and as such, sovereigntists have in some places (notably, Montreal) developed separate sites to celebrate

and class differences as well.<sup>30</sup> Such differences are beyond the scope of my dissertation, but they are important to bear in mind when we speak about "Canadian" Remembrance.

### **Remembrance as Militarization**

One of the debates among scholars of war commemoration in general is the degree to which these discourses serve a consolatory function as opposed to a political function. Of course, it is not necessarily an either/or situation: commemoration may serve people's emotional needs while at the same time enhancing the power of a limited group in society (Ashplant et al. 2000; Good and Good 1988). For example, consider the story of Sir Percy Fitzpatrick mentioned earlier this chapter in the section "A Brief History of Remembrance". Fitzpatrick had lost a son in the First World War; his grief was surely a major factor in his interest in promoting the two-minute silence; however, he also aspired to use the Silence to promote his political ideas of South African identity and British imperialism, and his social status gave him an ability to influence the British Cabinet which had at its disposal the power of the state to influence how **other** individuals throughout the Empire should express their bereavement and honour the war dead.<sup>31</sup>

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Remembrance Day in order to honour "their" war dead without honouring them as Canadians. Also, in 1998, a monument was created in Quebec City with financial support from city and provincial governments to commemorate the WWI resistance to conscription, and specifically the events in Quebec City of April 1, 1918 when Canadian soldiers fired machine guns against unarmed protesters, killing four (Djebabla-Brun 2004:124-5).

30 Newfoundland has a distinct tradition of war commemoration centred on the devastating losses suffered by the Newfoundland Regiment at Beaumont-Hamel on July 1, 1916 (see Bormanis 2010; Facey-Crowther 1986; Harding 2006). For Newfoundlanders, Canada Day (July 1) is also (war) Memorial Day (hence the name of Newfoundland's Memorial University). There are surely also distinct commemorations among at least some aboriginal First Nations, but I am not familiar with them and (apart from the brief account by Lobenski 1995) they seem to have received little scholarly attention. A National Aboriginal Veterans Monument was created in Ottawa in 2001, but the process of creating it, and any commemorative practices associated with it, do not seem to have been studied.

31 My point here is informed by Alistair Thomson's (1994) observation in his book on Anzac memories: "[O]ne of the lessons of growing up in a relatively powerful family and class is a recognition that its members do not simply, or conspiratorially, impose their views upon society. Their views are pervasive because of public power, but they are also sincerely believed and propagated" (5).

Nevertheless, on the topic of West European and Canadian Great War commemoration, Jay Winter (1995) and Jonathan Vance (1997) have emphasized bereavement as a factor behind the construction of remembrance practices and they have downplayed the role of politics. They take issue with George Mosse (1990) who interprets the post-WWI construction of war monuments and rituals across the West as nationalist and militaristic "cults" that "prepared many people to accept the inevitability of war" (181).

Canadian Remembrance clearly performed an important consolatory function when the discourse was created in the aftermath of WWI. However, when we consider the history of Remembrance from its inception to the present, it is equally clear that the need for consolation cannot always be the main determinant of the intensity of public commemoration. While approximately 60,000 Canadians were killed in WWI, another 45,000 were killed in WWII, yet after the Second World War, the interest in Remembrance actually declined only to pick up again at a time when Canadian losses in military operations were negligible by comparison. The revitalization of Remembrance began at a time when the Canadian military was only engaged in peacekeeping operations. In the NATO air war against Serbia in 1999, the Canadian Forces suffered no casualties. Even in the counter-insurgency ground war in Afghanistan, the total number of Canadians killed by the end of the 12-year mission was 158. When Remembrance declines after the deaths of 45,000 and then revitalizes during (and even prior to) the deaths of 158, the main determinant cannot be the popular need for consolation.<sup>32</sup>

The millennial revitalization of Remembrance could be explained in terms of the social memory of the Second World War. According to this possible explanation, as the "war

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<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, during the first five years of Canadian military operations in Afghanistan, the Government of Canada increased its annual spending on Remembrance activities by \$37 million, an increase of more than 200%.

generation" aged into their 70s and 80s, they became concerned with their legacy and younger Canadians became interested in their grandparents' experiences. This intergenerational stimulus for remembering unfolded in a wider cultural context in which, for a variety of possible reasons, Western societies became more interested in the meanings of WWII.<sup>33</sup> Certainly, some of the initiative for the revitalization of Remembrance came from war veterans' organizations that were asserting a positive interpretation of Canada's role in WWII against interpretations that were either negative (such as *The Valour and the Horror*) or that distracted attention from the veterans' experiences (such as the War Museum's proposal for a Holocaust gallery).<sup>34</sup> These were struggles over how WWII should be remembered in Canada, and they do seem to have resulted in a change in the dominant perception of that war. In 1997, Vance observed that Canada's social memory of WWII was "dominated by overtones of negativity" and a "marked reluctance to celebrate success" (10-11). That attitude was already starting to change at the time of his writing, and it is certainly more positive today as Canadians are more willing to celebrate not only the political achievements of the war (mainly interpreted as the defeat of fascism) but also military achievements of Canadians in battle (such as Ortona).

However, the revitalization of Remembrance was not limited to the Second World War. For example, one of the Canadian Legion's major initiatives during this time was the creation of the

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33 Ashplant et al. (2000) suggest a combination of: the ageing of veterans and Holocaust survivors with an interest in sharing their life stories; the symbolic importance of 50th anniversaries of major war events; and changing political conditions at the end of the Cold War. K.S. Inglis (2005) suggests that, in Australia in the 1990s, "with no easily imaginable future military activity for the country's armed forces other than peace-keeping... young people were free to respect patriotism and sacrifice and to feel for people killed, wounded and bereaved in wars without having any serious apprehension that those sentiments would be enlisted for some new conflict" (435). (Inglis makes clear in this passage that many Australians regard war commemoration as political, a tendency that I will note again later this chapter. This seems to be an important difference between Australia and Canada.)

34 On the *Valour and the Horror* controversy, see Collins 1993, Bercuson and Wise 1994, Fremeth 2010, and Warkentin 2006. The Legion's main complaint was against the documentary's suggestion that the Allied bombing of German cities was ineffective in winning the war and amounted to war crimes against civilians. The documentary also focused on Canadian losses in Hong Kong and Normandy with little attention to battlefield achievements or soldiers' positive experiences. On the Holocaust gallery controversy, see Sarty 2007.

Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. This reproduced in Canada a type of monument that exists in many nation-states to promote the virtue of military service and sacrifice for the nation (see K.S. Inglis 1993). The first such monuments were created simultaneously in Britain and France in 1920 as part of post-WWI commemorations. In keeping with the WWI origins of this monumental form, the Canadian Tomb is the grave of an unknown Canadian soldier<sup>35</sup> from the First World War whose remains were exhumed in France and repatriated to the Tomb in Canada. Despite the material connection to WWI, the scope of the monument is meant to be timeless: "the Unknown Soldier represents all Canadians, whether they be navy, army, air force or merchant marine, who died or may die for their country in all conflicts – past, present, and future" (VAC n.d.a.). The Canadian state has also encouraged the commemoration of WWI, especially the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Thus, while a variety of interests in the Second World War have contributed to the revitalization of Remembrance, the discourse that has been revitalized is not limited to the meaning of any war in particular; rather, what has been revitalized is a discourse on war in general.

In what follows, I will analyse Remembrance as a discourse of militarization. The term "militarization" refers to "the process in which civil society organizes itself for the production of violence" (Geyer quoted in Lutz 2004:320). The process is both material and discursive. In material terms, militarization includes the organization of the economy towards military ends, or the dominance of military interests in the structuring of society. In discursive terms, militarization involves the shaping of "societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force" (Lutz 2004:320). This can include "the shaping of national histories in ways that glorify

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35 Unknown in this context means the body of a soldier that was so badly damaged that it could not be identified and therefore had to be buried in an anonymous grave.

and legitimate military action" (Lutz 2002:723). Lutz suggests that changes in societies' "mode of warfare" result in changes in militarizing discourses. At present, with Western societies conceptualizing war as humanitarian,<sup>36</sup> it is no longer acceptable (as it sometimes was in the 19th and early 20th century) to celebrate the "merits of violence"; instead, the soldier has been reconceptualized from "warrior" into a more peace-loving figure who is sent reluctantly "into harm's way" (Lutz 2004:322; see also Twomey 2013). Furthermore, while war is no longer glorified (or at least, not as it was as in the past), the contemporary discourse of militarization encourages an acceptance of war by making it all-pervasive: "In militarized societies, war is always on our minds, even if we are technically at peace" (Gusterson 2007:156).<sup>37</sup>

Anthropologists of militarization and scholars of war commemoration have given little specific attention to commemoration as a militarizing discourse. Studies of war commemoration have tended to focus on how commemorative practices promote interpretations of specific wars

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36 Fassin and Pandolfi (2010) explain that this new war paradigm is based on the assertion of "the right of states to ignore the sovereignty of another state in the event of serious violation of humanitarian law" (11). They add: "Although this right is not recognized in international law... Western countries have used it with increasing regularity" since the early 1990s and particularly to justify military operations in Kosovo and Iraq that did not have UN authorization (11-13). Fassin (2010) examines the affective dimensions of this paradigm, Orford (2010) examines its logic of violence, and Pandolfi (2006, 2010) examines the "grey zone" of humanitarian/military governance and its challenges for ethnography.

37 The study of militarization is one among many recent trends in the anthropology of war and violence. The anthropological interest in warfare was, until the 1990s, primarily concerned with the evolutionary origins, social-structural causes and effects, and ecological contexts of war, especially among band and tribal societies. Since the 1990s, the focus has shifted towards ethnographic research on meanings and experiences associated with war, violence and terror. (For an overview, see Otterbein 1999, 2000; Sponsel 2000; Whitehead 2000; Simons 1999; Dentan 2008; Das 2008). As part of this recent trend, there has been research on military institutions of the modern state and the militarization of culture (Ben-Ari 1998; Ben-Ari and Frühstück 2003; Lutz 2001, 2002, 2004, 2009; Lutz and Millar 2012; Gusterson 2007; Gill 1997). While most of this work has focused on the experiences of civilians or the role of the military in the wider society (Ben-Ari and Frühstück 2003:56), some anthropologists have specifically investigated the subjectivities and cultural schemas of the perpetrators of violence, including research on shamans and witchcraft practitioners (Whitehead and Finnström 2013), tribal warriors (Conklin 2001; Bollig and Österle 2007), resistance fighters or terrorists (Abufarha 2009; Feldman 1991), and professional (state) soldiers (Bar and Ben-Ari 2005; Ben-Ari 1989, 1998; Grassiani 2013; Robben 2013; Sluka 2013; Gutmann and Lutz 2010; Vasquez 2008; Weiss 2005). (The sometimes problematic relationships between anthropology and militarization have also been examined; see Lutz 2009 for a recent critical review.) My dissertation contributes to this field of anthropological research by noting the potential significance of war commemoration as an aspect of militarization, and by documenting a particular Western cultural construction of violence (namely, the sacrificial frame) as it relates to both civilians and soldiers.

(e.g. J. Winter 1995; Vance 1997) and/or on how they construct citizenship and national identity (e.g. Kapferer 1998; Gillis 1994).<sup>38</sup> While Canadian Remembrance does perform these functions, it is also a discourse on war in general; not limited to any particular event in the past, it is a mobilization for the present, and it promotes attitudes and interpretations that make war acceptable for this "humanitarian" era. Remembrance does so primarily through what I will call the sacrificial framing of war.

### **Sacrifice: The Key Word of Remembrance**

The key word of Remembrance discourse is "sacrifice". The term appears in the Canadian government's definition of Remembrance: "remembrance is defined as honouring and commemorating the sacrifices, achievements and legacy of those who served in Government of Canada sanctioned wars, conflicts, peacekeeping and aid missions, in both military and civilian capacities" (VAC 2004a:122). In its "Testament – Articles of Faith", The Legion defines the poppy as a symbol of sacrifice: "The poppy is our emblem of supreme sacrifice... immortalizing as it does our remembrance and honouring of those who laid down their lives for ideals which they, we and all Canadians rightfully cherish" (RCL 2014:7). There is rarely a speech or text on Remembrance Day and related occasions that does not include the word. But what exactly does it mean? Is it just a shorthand for dying for your country?

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38 An exception in Anglosphere research is Australia, where there is a strong debate among scholars about the connections between war commemoration (especially Anzac Day) and militarization (e.g. Thomson 1994:6; McKenna and Ward 2007; Lake et al. 2010; McDonald 2010; Damousi 2012; J. McKay 2013; Twomey 2013). With British participation in wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, some British scholars have noted that "public support for the military campaign may be stealthily encouraged by the process of commemoration" (King 2010:21; see also Jenkins et al. 2012:357). Similarly, the war in Afghanistan has prompted more Canadian scholars to observe connections between Remembrance and militarization (Dupuis-Déri 2010a, 2010b; McKay and Swift 2012; Cornut and Turenne-Sjolander 2013; Evans 2007; N. Holmes 2005). In her analysis of the US National World War II Memorial, Doss (2008) suggests that the Memorial reflects and promotes a resurgent US imperialism (see also G. White 2006).

"Sacrifice" has a remarkable lexical range in the English language (Valeri 1994:103; Jones 1991:9; Zachhuber 2013).<sup>39</sup> In most contexts, it refers to a person's act of giving up something important of themselves in the service of a greater good, including the benefit of others. For example, it is common to speak of the sacrifices that parents make for their children. In this regard, sacrifice is a term for altruistic behaviour. However, when the context of its use is not obviously peaceful, the term readily connotes violence and death; this is historically due to the use of the term in the Christian Bible and its association with the crucifixion of Jesus. Long before Remembrance or even nation-states existed, sacrifice was a key term of Christianity (as it still is today). Interestingly, in the Bible, sacrifice originally refers to the act of **inflicting** death – on animal victims, in order to employ them as offerings to God. In the New Testament narrative, the meaning of sacrifice changes to emphasize self-sacrifice, as Jesus becomes the victim who goes willingly to his violent death as the sacrificial offering ("the Lamb of God") in order to rescue humanity from sin.<sup>40</sup> Through the influence of the dominant religion of Christianity,

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39 There is similar complexity in French (Strenski 2002), Italian (Grottanelli 1999) and probably other European languages as well. Indeed, sacrifice merits attention as a key word (Williams 1983) and key symbol (Ortner 1973) of Western culture. Strenski (2002:1) notes: "Sacrifice has been one of the most contentious and divisive notions of religion and politics in the West". The Oxford English Dictionary lists four meanings of sacrifice: (1) "Primarily, the slaughter of an animal... as an offering to God or a deity. Hence, in wider sense, the surrender to God or a deity, for the purpose of propitiation or homage, of some object of possession"; (2) "That which is offered in sacrifice"; (3) "The offering by Christ of Himself to the Father as a propitiatory victim in his voluntary immolation upon the cross; the Crucifixion in its sacrificial character"; (4) "The destruction or surrender of something valued or desired for the sake of something having, or regarded as having, a higher or more pressing claim". The fourth meaning is linked to the term "self-sacrifice" which is defined as "the giving up of one's own interests, happiness, and desires, for the sake of duty or the welfare of others". The most active meaning in everyday usage (at least in Canada) is probably the fourth, which is secular and non-ritual. Context and cultural stereotypes will determine the meaning that first comes to mind. For example, if Canadians hear about Canadian farmers "making sacrifices" they will probably think of the farmers giving up their personal desires and enduring pain in the service of their families or their farms. If Canadians hear about Ethiopian farmers "making sacrifices" they might be more inclined to imagine an act of ritual slaughter.

40 Fiddes (1989:61-82) provides a succinct and substantial description of the New Testament logic of sacrifice, its antecedents, and its secularization. In the original Hebrew and Greek Biblical texts, a variety of words were used to distinguish among different types of animal slaughters and other non-violent offerings to God. Jones (1991) describes how this variety was encompassed under the single term "sacrifice" in Latin and English translations of the Bible. The interpretation of Jesus' death as a ritual expiatory slaughter became dominant in Western Christianity, although this interpretation has not been uncontested (Sykes 1980, 1991; Strenski 2002; Wills 2013).

"sacrifice" has become a word that attributes the highest possible moral significance to violent death, and lends an aura of sacredness to the victim, as the victim is associated with the ultimate object of veneration in Western culture: the figure of Jesus, son of God.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, Remembrance discourse is in some respects an appropriation of Christian ritual and symbolism in the service of nationalism, with the figure of the dead soldier filling in for Christ.<sup>42</sup>

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It was through the narrative of Jesus' voluntary suffering and death that sacrifice was increasingly imagined by Christians as a work on the self, with an emphasis on inner disposition rather than ritual exchange, leading eventually to the word's secular meanings (Fiddes 1989:61-62; Hulmes 1991; Zachhuber 2013; Cavanaugh 2001; Schoenfeldt 2001). Meanwhile, among anthropologists, the study of sacrifice has remained almost exclusively the study of ritual offerings and slaughters. Even within anthropology's relatively limited, ritual purview, there is a "bewildering variety of phenomena that go under the name 'sacrifice'" (Valeri 1994:103). While some anthropologists advocate for a more restricted definition (e.g. Ruel 1990), others prefer a wider definition or no definition at all (e.g. Valeri 1994; de Heusch 1985; Lambek 2007). The major variables include whether or not the sacrificial object is an animal, plant, or inanimate object; whether or not a deity is involved; and whether the ritual is conceived as an offering, an expiation (or purification), or otherwise. Regardless, the common denominator in almost all anthropological conceptions of sacrifice is the ritual act of immolation or destruction (J.H.M. Beattie 1980) and when restricted definitions are proposed, they tend to focus on violence. For example, Valeri (1994) suggests that "sacrifice" should refer to a "family of practices connected with the taking of life where this life... has strong symbolic significations and thus a certain quality of 'forbiddenness' or... 'sacredness'" (130). Major work on sacrifice by anthropologists not already mentioned includes Hubert and Mauss (1964), Evans-Pritchard (1954), Turner (1976), and Bloch (1992). For related, significant work by non-anthropologists, see Jay (1992) and the contributions by Burkert, Girard and Smith in Hamerton-Kelly (1987). The study of sacrifice in anthropology has paid little attention to Christianity (Gomez 1991:40-43) although de Heusch (1985) suggests (following Detienne) that the Christian cultural background of most anthropologists has dominated (and in de Heusch's view, distorted) the development of theory. (Strenski 2003 observes that Hubert and Mauss's work on sacrifice was in fact motivated and designed to intervene against conservative French Catholic discourses on national identity and civic duty.) Jay (1992) provides a feminist, comparative analysis of sacrificial ritual, arguing that the rituals represent patriarchal efforts to appropriate women's reproductive power and enhance the power of male priests (see also Wills 2013). The most ambitious interpretation of sacrifice is Girard's (1977) contention that all sacrificial rituals are permutations of the scapegoat mechanism (whereby social harmony is periodically restored via the expulsion or murder of an arbitrary victim). For Girard, the scapegoat mechanism is the unconscious foundation of human culture, and the Gospels (but pointedly not the Christian churches) represent a radical deconstruction and moral critique (a form of consciousness-raising) of the power and injustice of scapegoating (Girard 1987). With few exceptions (e.g. Feldman 1991), Girard's work has had little impact on anthropology, probably due to the discipline's turn away from such universalist theories of culture origins and evolution (see R. Rosaldo 1987). Whatever the merits of Girard's hypothesis, his work does represent a rare and thought-provoking effort to compare and integrate Western and non-Western discourses of sacrifice.

41 Accordingly, I suggest that the function of the term "sacrifice" in Remembrance discourse is illocutionary as well as propositional. When we are told that soldiers make "sacrifices", we are implicitly presented with a sacred act towards which we should comport ourselves appropriately; the meaning of the word may be ambiguous or mundane, but it invokes a reverential or deferential attitude (see Bloch 1989) – especially, I suspect, among Canadians who have learned the conjunction of the word and the attitude through church attendance.

42 On portrayals of the Canadian soldier as Christ during and after the First World War, see Evans (2007:43-76 *passim*) and Vance (1997:39-44). The comparison of soldiers to Christ runs deep in European culture. The medieval church frequently upheld the knight who died serving his feudal lord as a martyr and imitation of Christ (Kantorowicz 1957:235-41).

As Christians say that Jesus "died for us", for all of humanity, Canadians say in Remembrance that the soldiers "died for us", for all Canadians. As Jesus is the object of a commemorative ritual, in the celebration of the communion ritual in churches every Sunday, so are the dead soldiers commemorated in a national ritual every November 11. Even the term "remembrance" makes an association between dead soldiers and Christ, as it is a term that many Christians have heard in church on a weekly basis at a key point in the ritual when the priest raises the host (representing Jesus' body) and the wine (representing Jesus' blood) and recites to the congregants the words of Jesus from the Last Supper: "do this in remembrance of me".<sup>43</sup>

While Remembrance has these strong associations with Christianity, it is nevertheless a secular discourse that celebrates the soldier's willingness to die – to "sacrifice" – for the nation. In celebrating the soldier's sacrifice, the nation effectively worships itself, as what is really celebrated is a sentiment attributed to the soldiers: a love of country so strong that one will die for it. This sentiment might be a necessary foundation of all nationalisms, and inculcating it is probably a key function of most or all war commemorations. While on one hand rituals of war commemoration are a "cult of the dead" (Warner 1959; Mosse 1990), on the other hand they make the nation itself an object of devotion (Kapferer 1988:1), as it is on the basis of the soldier's willingness to die for the nation that the dead soldiers are venerated as exemplary citizens. As such, war commemoration is a pedagogy or instruction in citizenship; it is a "civil religion" in Rousseau's sense – a set of rites and other practices that foster "social sentiments without which a

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43 Church-going Anglicans hear this every Sunday: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). Shipley (1987:142) notes the similarity between the ceremonies of Remembrance Day and the Eucharist. (All quotes from the Bible in this dissertation are from the King James Version, as this version has had the most influence on the language and culture in which Remembrance discourse has been fashioned.)

man cannot be a good citizen or a faithful subject" (Rousseau 1973:276).<sup>44</sup> In his study of interwar rituals of commemoration in France, Prost (1997) argues that they precisely fulfilled Rousseau's prescription for "civic proselytism and pedagogy" (329). Prost adds his own view that "a Republic that does not teach itself and does not celebrate itself is a dead Republic, that is, a Republic for which people are no longer willing to die" (330). In this view, the survival of the nation is dependent on its citizens' willingness to die for it.

We find this pedagogy of national sacrifice in the Legion's "Remembrance Day Message" for students aged 12 to 17 that is included in the Legion's Teacher's Guide. Referring to the motivations of the Canadian men who volunteered to fight in World War Two, the text goes on to prompt students to consider their own readiness to fight in war:

Motivated by patriotism and duty, they made a great sacrifice. We should think about what it would be like if it were necessary to do this today....  
Remembrance Day is the time we honour those who paid the supreme sacrifice,

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44 One of the reasons that Rousseau saw the need for a civil religion was his belief that the new republic would need an army, and he believed that Christians made bad soldiers: "They know better how to die than how to conquer" (Rousseau 1973:274-5). Evidently, civil religion took a subsequent turn towards "self-sacrifice" that Rousseau did not anticipate, but it is noteworthy that a military imperative was present in the concept of civil religion from its inception. Rousseau later elaborated on his concept, recommending the use of games, festivals and spectacles to "bind the citizens to the fatherland" (Rousseau 1985:8). This calculated use of popular culture has been a point of departure for many studies of the invention of national traditions (e.g. Mosse 1975; Hobsbawm 1983a,1983b). However, in their focus on secular rites, these studies have tended to neglect the transcendent dimension suggested by the term "religion" in the civil religion concept. The transcendent is emphasized by Bellah (1967, 1978) in his work on American civil religion. For Bellah, civil religion is not the same as nationalism; it is "the symbolization of an ultimate order of existence in which republican values and virtues make sense" (1978:20). What Bellah and scholars in dialogue with him have identified is "a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man [and woman] **as citizen**... to the ultimate conditions of his [and her] existence" (Coleman 1970:69, emphasis added). As examples, Bellah points to the "theme of death, sacrifice, and rebirth" in American celebrations of Lincoln and the war dead (1967:11) and the idea that the "nation stands under higher judgement" and serves a higher purpose than itself (1967:17). (On different conceptions of civil religion, including Durkheim's contribution, see Cristi 2001.)

Bellah and Coleman's work on civil religion can help us to understand the power of sacrifice as a keyword and symbol. While citizens can be called on to "sacrifice" for the nation, the word retains its Christian associations with the sacred and universal, and thus any calls to serve the nation through this idiom can also evoke the idea that one is at the same time serving a good higher than the nation (or that the nation is serving a higher good). Furthermore, sacrifice also has material connotations of meaningful bodily suffering that appeal to certain gendered constructions of the self (discussed later in this section).

but it also provides each of us with the opportunity to reflect on how we would feel if our whole pattern of life was threatened. Would we have the courage to do what our grandfathers and grandmothers did? (RCL 2008:35).

In this civic pedagogy, war becomes the condition for the greatest expression of civic (and personal) virtue. One demonstrates one's incontestable commitment to the greater good by becoming a soldier and risking death in war. As such, the idea of sacrifice is not only a central feature of war commemoration; it has also been central to **recruitment** for war and for maintaining the morale of armies during war.<sup>45</sup>

Here, the lexical or conceptual range of sacrifice is particularly useful. While many soldiers and civilians may find the nation a sufficiently noble cause in its own right, the object of sacrifice may also be imagined as a more universal value that transcends the nation (yet for which the nation might be an instrument or representative) such as peace and justice. The association of sacrifice with Jesus Christ makes it easier, at least for Christians, to imagine that one is serving higher virtues by serving the nation in war. Furthermore, the idea of sacrifice – of suffering violence for the greater good – is associated with masculine ideals in a number of ways, such that discourses of sacrifice can appeal to men who do not otherwise consider themselves idealistic.<sup>46</sup>

In terms of masculine ideals, first there is the idea that a man should be willing to endanger

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45 Watson and Porter (2008) make this point in their study of the "ideology of sacrifice" during WWI in Britain and Germany. Alan Young (1989) argues similarly in the case of Canada that the "high diction" of sacrifice was useful for WWI recruitment and morale, and then following the war it became a "medium of consolation" (11).

46 This polysemy, or different but related meanings of sacrifice, may be conceptualized metaphorically as a musical chord. We could say that sacrificial discourse strikes a chord in audiences who are attuned to it, making people feel connected to the transcendent even as they are moved in their bodies. Due to different social statuses and personal biographies (see Strauss and Quinn 1997; Westen 2001), people will be differently attuned to feel some notes in the chord more than others. This musical metaphor draws on the acoustic metaphor that is implicit in Turner's (1967a) concept of symbols as multivocal as well as his discussion of the material and abstract poles of key symbols. In any case, I suggest that the power of sacrificial discourse is this capacity to make civic duty resonate with cultural meanings of the body and the divine, and this is how we might understand civil religion as something related to, perhaps essential to, but not reducible to nationalism.

himself to protect his family. For example, in a pre-WWI British pamphlet on "Religious Thought and National Service", the author (an Anglican priest) told his readers that war is "sacrifice, which is the soul of Christianity" but went on to support his argument by invoking a masculine duty that could appeal equally to irreligious and possibly even unpatriotic men: "A lad... knows that he stands between his mother and his sisters, his sweetheart and his girlfriends... and the inconceivable infamy of alien invasion" (quoted in Summers 1976:120).<sup>47</sup>

Second is the masculine ideal of risking one's life for one's friends. Here, sacrifice can be associated with men's desires for male camaraderie and desires to be highly esteemed among men. The most famous expression of this ideal in English tradition is probably Henry V's Saint Crispin's Day Speech in the play by Shakespeare, in which King Henry exhorts his troops before battle: "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; / For he to-day that sheds his blood with me / Shall be my brother" (Henry V, Act IV Scene iii). This sacrificial dimension of male fraternity can also be found in the Bible where Jesus tells his disciples at the Last Supper: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

Finally, there is a way in which sacrifice, in terms of suffering violence but in this case without dying (though always with some possibility of death), connects with a cultural logic of achieving masculinity that does not necessarily involve any service to the greater good (although masculinity itself may be conceptualized as a social good). According to this standard of hegemonic masculinity which is common in many cultures and remains a significant force in the contemporary West, boys must become men through a process of "toughening" and learning to endure pain (Connell 1987:183-188; Ben-Ari 1998:113-116; Gilmore 1990:223-4; Harari

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<sup>47</sup> There is also a subtle appeal to men's sexual jealousy in the reference to some "inconceivable" infamy that the women are at risk of suffering from an enemy; notice furthermore how this enemy is racialized as an "alien". This pamphlet will be discussed again in Chapter 3.

2008:33). In patriarchal cultures, male superiority is often predicated on men's emotional control (Lutz 1990; McElhinny 1994; Mosse 1996), particularly their concealment of their "weaker" or "softer" emotions (Cornwall and Lindisfarne 1994:14) that betray their hurt. Boys seeking to prove their manhood will therefore seek opportunities to endure pain in order to demonstrate their emotional strength or "hardness". In some cultures, such painful trials are institutionalized as male rites of passage. Where such rites are uncommon, as in the contemporary West, military service and war can serve the same function (Joane Nagel 1998; Sasson-Levy 2008; Gill 1997; Dyer 1985). The boy or young man may be regarded or may regard himself as losing his more "feminine" nature through violence in order to become a man (G. Lloyd 1986).<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the term "sacrifice" strikes a chord of overlapping discourses on religion, politics, and gendered personal identity. What all of these discourses share in common is the effort to make meaning and derive virtue from violent death or suffering. Remembrance discourse focuses on the virtue of dying for Canada. Notice that this "sacrifice" could, at least hypothetically, be honoured even in cases where nothing else was achieved. That is, soldiers who die in a losing battle or war can still be celebrated for their willingness to give up their lives for their nation.

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48 Sasson-Levy (2008) notes that, even as Israeli society has become more individualistic and less committed to a self-sacrificing ethos, many young Israeli men are still keen on military service because of the "bodily practices that are offered to the soldiers" (315) that constitute a form of "masculine self-actualization" (316) particularly through opportunities "to endure pain... and control emotion" (302). Having noted this work on the self, however, we should not discount the potential significance of performing acts of violence on others as a form of masculine self-actualization. As one American Iraq war veteran, Demond Mullins, told Gutmann and Lutz (2010) about the day he completed his last mission: "My executive officer walked up to me and said, 'You're a man now!' That's what he said to me. And I thought about that, and I still think about that now. Daily. Because is it violence, is it acts of violence that make me a man?" (138).

Meanwhile, G. Lloyd (1986) observes that women – especially as mothers – are expected to facilitate this process of male socialization and accept the personal losses that it entails: "In giving up their sons [to military service and death in war], women are supposed to allow them to become real men and immortal selves. Surrendering sons to significant deaths becomes a higher mode of giving birth. Socially constructed motherhood, no less than socially constructed masculinity, is at the service of an ideal of citizenship that finds its fullest expression in war" (76). This giving up of their sons (both their sons' emotional attachments and their sons' lives) seems to be the primary way in which women are interpellated, as mothers, by the discourse of sacrifice (see also Evans 2007; Cornut and Turenne-Sjolander 2013). For Christians, the key symbol of course is Mary.

Nevertheless, Remembrance is not only focused on the act of dying; it also stresses achievement in tandem with sacrifice. The phrase that occurs repeatedly in Canadian state discourse is "achievements and sacrifices". On one hand, this is a straightforward assertion that Canadian soldiers, whether they died or not, won battles and wars with positive results for Canada and the world. On the other hand, there is a deeper cultural (or religious) logic that achievements inevitably follow from sacrifice, as one of the attributes of sacrificial death is meant to be regeneration.<sup>49</sup> In Christian belief, Jesus's sacrifice is the foundation of new life. A similar logic of regenerative sacrifice is expressed in one of the winning essays in the Legion's Literary Contest for Canadian youth. In her winning essay at the Junior Level in 2003, Karalee Derkson wrote:

The poppy, growing out of the grave, represents hope. Because of these men and women giving their lives, we can have life. The poppy is a new and vibrant life growing out of the sacrifice of others (RCL 2003:5).

As the poppy grows from the grave in Derkson's essay, there are two discourses about "new life" that are nourished by Remembrance. They do not appear in every iteration of Remembrance, and they vary in intensity, but generally they amount to claims about the positive achievements of war: that war made Canada, and that war makes peace. These are in effect corollaries that are meant to follow from the main "argument" of Remembrance.

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<sup>49</sup> Scholars of religion refer to this as cosmogonic sacrifice, i.e. sacrifice that creates or recreates the world. According to Lincoln (1991), Indo-Europeans believed that the universe was created through a sacrificial killing and "all existence would collapse" without repeated ritual sacrifices performed by specialist priests (5). (Such practices of killing as rites of fertility and renewal, especially of divine kings, were a major interest of Frazer's *Golden Bough*.) Among the Aztecs, human sacrifice was practiced in the belief that it served to sustain the gods and thereby the cosmos (Carrasco 1995). More generally, Bloch and Parry (1982) note that the renewal of life through death is a theme in many cultures, including the belief that death (sacrificial or otherwise) may enhance the fertility of land or people.

### **Achievement (1): War Made Canada**

The modest version of this claim is that war has "shaped" Canada. At the Canadian War Museum, the first text panel of the opening gallery informs visitors: "War has shaped Canada and Canadians for at least 5,000 years." The claim was slightly stronger in the mission statement of Veterans Affairs' Strategic Plan in 2001: "Canada's development as an independent country with a unique identity stems in **no small measure** from its achievements in times of war" (VAC 2001a:8, emphasis added). In 2009, Veterans Affairs strengthened the claim further: "Canada's development as an independent country with a unique identity stems **largely** from its achievements in times of war" (VAC 2009a:3, emphasis added). The shift from "no small measure" to "largely" suggests a growing commitment to the idea that war is important to Canadian identity. That commitment to the link between war and national identity is demonstrated most strongly in the revival of the myth of the WWI battle of Vimy Ridge.<sup>50</sup>

Vimy Ridge was the site of major German fortifications on the Western Front in France. After failed attempts to capture the ridge by other Allied armies, the task was assigned to the Canadian Corps, with all four of its divisions united to fight together for the first time. The Canadians attacked the ridge on April 9, 1917, and took it on April 12 after suffering approximately 3600 fatalities (D. Inglis 1995:32). Brigadier-General Alex Ross famously said of the opening moments of the battle: "It was Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific on parade. I thought then... that in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation" (quoted in D. Inglis

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<sup>50</sup> It is common for Canadian scholars to use the term "myth" with reference to discourses about Vimy as our national birthplace (e.g. D. Inglis 1995; Vance 1997). I am using the term here as Vance does, without any specific anthropological meaning, simply to identify "a discourse that communicate[s] the past in a pure, unambiguous, and simple fashion" and that is characterised by a "combination of invention, truth, and half-truth" (10). Although D. Inglis suggests that myth is "not necessarily a pejorative term" (2), it certainly indicates a skeptical attitude. Proponents of Vimy, such as the Vimy Foundation, never refer to it as myth, preferring the terms "story" and "message".

1995:31). At the time, Canada was still a colony of Great Britain. Vimy Ridge has been credited with inspiring a new consciousness of Canadian identity among soldiers and civilians, and with achieving greater political autonomy for Canada, as Canada gained a seat at the Paris Peace Conference and a separate signature on the peace treaty that ended the war (D. Inglis 1995:2).

Partly for these reasons, Vimy became the site of what remains the largest Canadian war memorial in existence, the Canadian National Vimy Memorial, which commemorates both the battle itself as well as all the Canadian soldiers who served and died in WWI (Figures 9 and 10). Prime Minister Mackenzie King justified the location and size of the monument by describing Vimy as "one of the world's great altars, on which a perceptible portion of our manhood has been sacrificed in the cause of the world's freedom" (quoted in D. Inglis 1995:61).<sup>51</sup> The popularity of Vimy has waxed and waned since the monument's dedication in 1936 (D. Inglis 1995; Lermite 2010). Public interest in Vimy declined after the Second World War, was renewed briefly around the time of Canada's Centennial in 1967, and declined again in the 1970s and 1980s (D. Inglis 1995). A revival of interest in Vimy coincided with the general revitalization of Remembrance, starting in the 1990s with the declaration of the Vimy Memorial as a National Historic Site in 1997, the designation of Vimy Ridge Day (April 9) as a national (non-statutory) holiday in 2003, the decision to give the new Canadian War Museum the address of 1 Vimy Place in 2005, and the restoration of the monument (at a cost of \$22 million) starting in 2005 and culminating in a rededication ceremony in 2007 (Lermite 2010:16). The Vimy Memorial appears on the first page of the Legion's Teachers' Guide and was chosen as the main image (alongside poppies) on the

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51 Although he celebrated the Vimy Memorial in public, the Prime Minister had some reservations about it in private. King wrote in his diary: "It is in fact the most pretentious war memorial in the world." He felt that a shared Allied monument would have been "more suitable". The memorial, in his private opinion, exaggerated Canada's importance: "One cannot but feel that a sense of proportion and of the fitness of things is lacking in anything so pretentious in comparison with war memorials of countries most concerned." (Entry for Sunday, October 11, 1936, in *Diaries of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King*, Library and Archives Canada.)

new 20 dollar bill issued in 2012.

Much of the revival of Vimy is due to the efforts of the Vimy Foundation, whose mission is "to preserve and promote Canada's First World War legacy as symbolized with the victory at Vimy Ridge in April 1917, a milestone where Canada came of age and was then recognized on the world stage" (Vimy Foundation 2012a). The Foundation focuses especially on bringing this "coming of age" story to Canadian youth. The Foundation's website states:

The message of Vimy Ridge is one of bravery and sacrifice. The battle, which took place on April 9, 1917, is commonly highlighted as a turning point in Canadian history, where the four Canadian divisions fought together as a unified fighting force for the first time. While 3,598 Canadian soldiers were killed during the battle, the impressive victory over German forces is often cited as the beginning of Canada's evolution from dominion to independent nation. The Vimy Foundation is working to spread the word to Canada's youth – through initiatives like the Vimy Prize and the Vimy Pin – so that all Canadians understand the importance of Vimy to the nation's identity (Vimy Foundation 2012b).

Notice the familiar invocation of sacrifice, together with its achievements: national consciousness and status. The Foundation has successfully lobbied Canadian governments to observe Vimy Day by lowering flags to half-mast, and it holds a commemorative ceremony on Vimy Day at the National War Memorial in collaboration with Veterans Affairs. As mentioned previously, the Foundation organizes youth educational programs in collaboration with Historica's Encounters with Canada on the theme, "Vimy: Canada's Coming of Age". The Foundation offers educational materials on its website, notably an interactive program called Vimy REAL (see Chapter Four) and it provides scholarships for Canadian high school students to attend summer educational WWI battlefield tours. The Foundation's efforts have received substantial state support: it

successfully lobbied for placing the Vimy theme on the new \$20 bill, and VAC has committed \$5 million towards the Foundation's project to construct a new education centre at Vimy Ridge. The Foundation is presently engaged in a fundraising campaign for the education centre using the slogan "Give a Vimy for Vimy", which is simultaneously an effort at branding the \$20 bill "the Vimy", an effort aimed at creating a status for Vimy in Canadian popular culture on a par with our attachments to iconic Canadian animals.<sup>52</sup>

While some iterations of the Vimy myth point to the battle's role in winning post-war political leverage for Canada (a point that can be fruitfully debated among historians), there is also a subtle tendency to celebrate the battle as a performance and production of Canadian masculine character traits (see Keshen 2003), as if the tactics of the battle and actions of the soldiers demonstrate our essential, enduring and masculinised national character. These "birth of a nation" discourses follow the sacrificial logic described in the previous section, whereby manhood is achieved through the willing endurance of pain and violence. The nation is imagined as a male individual (see Yuval-Davis 1997) who needs to "come of age" through a violent rite of passage; it is implied that the Vimy battle was a violent rite in which we achieved national status through Canadian men's willingness to endure hardship, pain and death. The Vimy myth also reiterates the idea that men who shed their blood together are bonded together, as in Shakespeare's "band of brothers". The Vimy myth thus reinforces and expands on the existing

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52 The dollar coin is commonly called "the loonie" because it bears the image of a loon. The two-dollar coin bears the image of a polar bear, but is called "the toonie" to rhyme with "the loonie". Calling the 20-dollar bill "the Vimy" would follow this rhyming pattern while associating Vimy Ridge with these animal icons. The 20-dollar bill is the note most issued by bank machines and is the most widely used bank note in Canada (Carney 2012). The ceremony to introduce the new bill was held at the Canadian War Museum on November 7, 2012, shortly before Remembrance Day, with the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the President of the Vimy Foundation in attendance. At the issue ceremony, Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty described the new bill as a "poignant reminder of how valour, bravery and sacrifice helped build this country" and Vimy Foundation President David Houghton added that Canadians would now carry this reminder in their wallets. Also in attendance was 16-year old Madison Ford, recently returned from a 5,000 member youth pilgrimage to Vimy. Ford declared that the Vimy battle was the birth of "a truly Canadian identity". See the video of the ceremony at Carney 2012.

sacrificial theme of the larger discourse of Remembrance.

Indeed, even when the Vimy myth is criticised, the sacrificial theme can nevertheless be reinforced. For example, Jean Martin, an historian at National Defence Headquarters, argues that the "birth of a nation" narrative privileges Anglo-Canadians to the exclusion of French-Canadians and other minority groups. Nearly half of the soldiers in the Canadian Corps had been born in Britain, and of the remainder, the majority could trace their recent ancestry to Britain. The argument that Canadian identity was achieved at Vimy (or in WWI generally) thus attributes the creation of Canada to the dominant Anglo-Canadian ethnic group (with an emphasis on the **men** of that group). Martin observes:

To claim that the nation was born on 9 April 1917, on the Artois plains is to deny more than three centuries of history during which the ancestors of millions of Canadians devoted their lives to building this country. If Canada was born in the trenches of France and Belgium between 1915 and 1918, it was only in the minds of a few thousand soldiers who had very shallow roots there. In the minds of most of its inhabitants, Canada had already existed for a long time (38).

However, in pointing out the problematic Anglo-Canadian exclusivity of the Vimy legend, Martin affirms another problematic interpretation as an alternative:

The true intention behind the Vimy memorial was to honour the soldiers who fell defending their country. To perpetuate that memory is a duty (38).

This suggests a duty to remember the positive virtues of Vimy and the war, and the reasons that men fought it. Martin's affirmation is characteristic of the uncritical interpretation of WWI that is

promoted by Remembrance discourse and the Vimy myth in which, as McKay and Swift (2012) observe, the "devastated landscape of death in France and Flanders figures, not as an indictment of the social and political order that produced it, but as the sublime backdrop against which heroic individuals perform their acts of self-sacrificial chivalry" (73).

Even when Vimy and the First World War are not upheld as the birthplace of Canada, the sacrificial framing of these events promotes an uncritical approach to war. In all of the celebrations of Vimy Ridge, it is exceedingly rare to find any mention of why Canadians were fighting the Germans. Attention is focused on the Canadian soldiers' experiences and commitment, their battlefield tactics, their courage and of course, their sacrifice.

The discourse of Vimy as a rite of passage to nationhood is effectively a discourse on the virtues of violence and an acceptance of circumstances that, in other contexts, most Canadians would consider appalling. Basically, the discourse of Vimy suggests that Canada had to prove to Britain that Canadian men were strong enough to kill Germans – for reasons that are apparently not important enough to mention – and suffer bloody injury and gruesome death in order to gain our independence; or, notwithstanding Britain's approval, that Canadians needed to engage in such violence in order to gain an identity, as if the nation had to be "blooded". The scenario is akin to beating up on somebody who has done nothing against you in order to gain self-esteem and the approval of a third party. In taking for granted such a scenario, and in its relative silence on the reasons for the war, the nation-making myth of Vimy implicitly promotes an acceptance of violence as a natural way of achieving identity and self-worth.

The idea that Canada was born in war can also make it seem normal that Canada goes to war in the present, as going-to-war becomes part of who we are as a nation. In this respect, the revitalization of Remembrance has served to displace the idea of Canada as a peacekeeping

nation. For example, on Remembrance Day in 2001, as the war in Afghanistan had just begun,

*The Globe and Mail* wrote in its editorial:

Remembrance Day calls this country to its true nature. Canada cannot be straitjacketed as a "peacekeeping nation," as some would have it; it is a country that has regularly gone to war.... Why must we remember war? So that we may gird ourselves to do what is necessary. Now, by recalling the sacrifices of our past and by facing up to our present, Canadians are keeping faith with previous generations (The Globe and Mail 2001).<sup>53</sup>

According to the editorial, Remembrance Day serves to remind Canadians of our true nature – that we are a nation that goes to war. Three years previously on Remembrance Day, the *Globe* had editorialized:

The need to remember – to stand silent and reflect privately on the meaning of public sacrifice – creates a bond that links past and future generations. Inevitably, we remember so that we will never forget that blood forged us as a people and a country (The Globe and Mail 1998).

An additional implication of this discourse of a nation forged in blood is that Canadian identity derives from (and is perhaps renewed by) military action **overseas**. Thus, "keeping faith" might require maintaining our participation in the NATO alliance and our willingness to fight in European wars or alongside European nations.<sup>54</sup> In particular, the Vimy myth supports an Anglo-

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53 *The Globe and Mail* is Canada's largest-circulation national newspaper and is considered by many to be Canada's paper of record, associated with traditional business elites and the university-educated middle class.

54 The Director General of VAC's Canada Remembers program has described the Vimy Memorial as "a wonderful way to project Canada in Europe" (quoted in Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs 2011:16). The Veterans Affairs Standing Committee goes on to note: "many Europeans are grateful to Canadians for their generosity in crossing the Atlantic to preserve freedom in a show of solidarity. Canadian memorials in Europe are a tangible expression of that common bond" (11). VAC opened a European Operations Division in 2006.

Canadian definition of the nation which is consistent with Canada's close military and security alliances within the global Anglosphere.<sup>55</sup>

### **Achievement (2): War Makes Peace**

In addition to the idea that war made Canada, Remembrance discourse routinely invokes the desire for peace. The "Remembrance and Peacekeeping" 10 dollar bill includes the phrase "In the service of peace" above the image of the National War Memorial, the veteran and the peacekeeping soldiers (see Jefferess 2009). The Peace Tower of Canada's Parliament Buildings was built as a memorial to WWI, with a Memorial Chamber containing seven Books of Remembrance that list the names of all Canadians who have died in military service from the South African War to recent peacekeeping operations (RCL 2008:13; Alan Young 1989:13-14). The Canadian War Museum symbolically gestures to peace in the spatial alignment of its architecture with a view corridor that draws attention the the Peace Tower to its east, especially in the museum's Regeneration Hall (Moriyama 2006:49; see Chapter 4).

While desires for peace are frequently expressed on Remembrance Day, there are also statements that peace is the purpose of war – that we fight wars for peace. For example, the Legion's Teacher's Guide to Remembrance includes a story, "Mark's First Poppy", in which a young boy learns about war and Remembrance from his grandfather:

Mark sat on the foot stool in front of his Grandpa and was ready to listen carefully. "The man that you saw in the uniform was once a brave soldier," Grandpa began. "Many soldiers have fought in different wars throughout

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<sup>55</sup> For example, Canada's participation in the Five-Eyes alliance of intelligence operations (the UKUSA Agreement). See the footnote on the Anglosphere in Chapter 1.

history. You see, wars are not just stories of the past, they are going on right now in other countries. Wars are fought for many different reasons: to protect our freedom, sometimes to change things, but most of all to keep peace throughout the world" (RCL 2008:31).

The idea that wars are fought to keep peace seems paradoxical (although, in the story, it does not trouble Mark). The logic could be that the preparedness for war acts as a deterrent that prevents enemies from starting wars. More likely is the idea that it is the enemy who is "warlike" and thus we go to war to defeat those who want war, those who are responsible for bringing war into the world. However, this discourse of war-for-peace may also resonate with an older logic of the redemptive power of violence that is an element in Christian doctrine. The cleansing power of violence is expressed in the Bible most clearly in the Letter to the Hebrews: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). By remission, the text was referring to the forgiveness of sins; it was according to this mystical law of violence that Jesus gained for humanity the possibility of redemption and eternal life through his purifying sacrificial death (Fiddes 1989:71-73; Wills 2013:173-187). This was the lens through which many Canadians understood the Great War as "the war to end wars". Lucy Maud Montgomery (author of *Anne of Green Gables*) wrote in her diary during the war:

'Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.' Without shedding of blood there is no **anything!** Everything, it seems to me, must be bought by sacrifice. The race has marked every footstep of its painful ascent by blood. And now torrents of it must flow! (quoted in Alan Young 1989:18).

Not many Canadians today would embrace such an explicit statement on the need for bloodshed; nevertheless, this is a logic of violence that is implicitly taught whenever it is suggested that Jesus

"died for our sins" and this probably contributes to the acceptance of the war-for-peace discourse.

Remembrance references to peace also serve to reassure Canadians that we are not celebrating war by participating in Remembrance. Indeed, one of the regular features of Remembrance is the meta-discourse that Remembrance is not a "glorification" of war. For example, the *Globe and Mail* Remembrance Day editorial in 1998 concluded:

Remembrance Day is not about glorifying war. Rather, it is about honouring sacrifice and remembering the past (The Globe and Mail 1998).

In this respect, Remembrance may work as a sort of cultural compromise that reconciles Canadians who are strongly opposed to war with those who support a more aggressive use of the military. However, the compromise tends to work in favour of militarism, as evidenced by the struggles of peace activists to find a stronger voice or role in Remembrance. For example, in 2007 the Canadian Director of Physicians for Global Survival lamented that the Canadian War Museum does little "to educate about peace, war prevention, disarmament, and peaceful resolution of violent conflict" (Grisdale 2007:7; see also Managhan 2012:118). Grisdale observed that "there is a pervasive feeling of the inevitability of war throughout" the museum, as in the repeated suggestions that "wars are fought to bring peace" (7).<sup>56</sup> Partly in response to pressure from peace activists, the War Museum prepared an exhibit that was called, simply, *Peace – the Exhibition*, which related stories of "how generations of Canadians have negotiated, organized, and intervened for peace" (CWM n.d.d). However, this was a special exhibition that ran only

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<sup>56</sup> She quotes the testimony of a Vietnamese-Canadian: "The Canadian War Museum aroused compassion in me for the people who suffered due to wars, mostly for the soldiers who fought in the war and sacrificed their life or part of their body. It also gave me some knowledge of Canadian history but it fails to create an understanding of war, of how to deal with conflicts among groups and nations without using force. It also does not help me reflect on how we can live our life to promote peace and avoid war" (Grisdale 2007:7).

from May 2013 to January 2014; it was not a permanent change to the structure of the museum. Notably, reviewers of *Peace – the Exhibition* felt the need to justify the inclusion of peace in a museum "of war". The *Maclean's* magazine reviewer noted that, although peace might appear "incongruous" at the museum, nevertheless "seeking peace has long been a reason for war" (Petrou 2013). The *Ottawa Citizen* reviewer also suggested that "an exhibit on peace at a war museum may appear contradictory" and then quoted the exhibit's curator, Amber Lloydlangston: "The desire to work for peace has been a motive to fight in wars as much as it has been to oppose them" (Fenton 2013). Evidently, the exhibit on peace could be interpreted in a manner that reiterates the necessity for war, the very notion that peace activists such as Grisdale wanted to challenge in the first place.

In 2013, peace activists in Ottawa distributed white poppies before Remembrance Day as a way of suggesting that Remembrance Day should focus more on the suffering of civilians and the need to prevent war.<sup>57</sup> The activists from the Rideau Institute noted that "in many Remembrance Day ceremonies, and especially in Ottawa, the focus is on commemorating wars, rather than

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<sup>57</sup> As opposed to the red poppy, which is meant to symbolise sacrifice in war, the white poppy represents "a definitive pledge to peace" and a repudiation of war (Menzies 2011). The white poppy was an initiative of the Women's Co-operative Guild in Britain for Armistice Day in 1933, later adopted by the Peace Pledge Union. The British Legion is hostile to the symbol and Margaret Thatcher condemned it in the 1980s (Iles 2008:210). Until recently, it was relatively unknown in Canada, but a few incidents since 2010 have gained the attention of the media, the Legion and the government. When members of the Ottawa White Poppy Coalition laid wreaths of white poppies at the National War Memorial after the Remembrance Day service in 2010, the wreaths were removed by members of the public, one of whom called them a "desecration" (CTV Ottawa 2010). An editorial in the *Ottawa Sun* called the white poppy a "disgrace" and labelled its advocates "politically correct fundamentalists" and "hippies". Asserting that "war is horrible, and yet, it rewards us with so much," the editorial continued, "Imagine the world without the courage to confront Hitler." The editorial further argued that white poppies threaten the fundraising potential of red poppies which helps "veterans who have fallen on hard times and need financial help... to make sure they aren't left out in the cold". The editorial concluded that those who want to wear white poppies "should do so in their own homes, with windows shut and the blinds drawn. They aren't welcome anywhere else" (Ottawa Sun 2010). Meanwhile, the Legion's official reaction to small-scale local efforts to distribute white poppies, notably in Ottawa and Charlottetown, has been to threaten legal action to protect the poppy symbol over which it holds a trademark (CTV News 2010).

trying to prevent war itself" (Ceasefire.ca 2013).<sup>58</sup> The Institute's white poppy campaign was condemned by the Minister of Veterans Affairs, the Legion, and columnists in Sun Media.<sup>59</sup> The Secretary of the Legion's Poppy and Remembrance Committee argued that the white poppy campaigners had misunderstood Remembrance: "The red poppy is a symbol of sacrifice. It's not a glorification of war" (Proussalidis 2013a).<sup>60</sup> Online comments by readers of Sun Media articles also dismissed the activists for their "ignorance" of Remembrance. Comments included the following: "Living in peace IS what it's all about", "Red Poppy = already a symbol of peace", "A white poppy for Peace? Just what do they think the red poppy is for if not for peace?"<sup>61</sup>

Certainly, Remembrance is "for peace" in the sense that the discourse regularly invokes peace as a value. However, in Remembrance discourse, peace tends to be constructed as something that must be defended by war, so that ultimately the need for war is asserted. Indeed, even though Remembrance promotes the virtues of dying in war and defines Canada as a war-making nation, its ritualized gestures towards peace have the effect of fortifying the discourse against criticism by peace activists, as the discourse has already laid claim to the public's desire for peace. Remembrance discourse seems to include the "common sense" notion that Remembrance is already a peace discourse and therefore (according to this common sense) the criticisms by peace activists are irrelevant and obtuse. In effect, Remembrance becomes an

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58 The Rideau Institute is a non-profit organization that advocates for a more progressive, independent and peaceful Canadian foreign and defence policy.

59 Minister Julian Fantino said that white poppy activists showed "a total lack of respect" for veterans and Remembrance Day and that "reasonable Canadians" would reject the white poppy. The Liberal Party's Veterans Affairs critic also condemned the white poppy and said that activists needed to "get a reality check" (Proussalidis 2013b). Sun Media (including the *Toronto Sun* and *Ottawa Sun*) is a chain of tabloid newspapers in Canada that usually adopt a right-wing populist editorial stance.

60 Notice the repetition of the meta-discourse that Remembrance is "not a glorification of war". None of the white poppy activists were reported as having said that Remembrance is a glorification, but they were reacted to as if they had. It would be interesting to analyse this meta-discourse as a sort of defence-mechanism of Remembrance.

61 Not all of the online comments were critical of the white poppy. Some *Sun* readers suggested that they would consider wearing a white poppy together with the red one.

instrument for appropriating the wish for peace while suppressing efforts to prevent war.

### **The Affective Pedagogy of Remembrance**

To a remarkable extent, Remembrance discourse is directed at children and adolescents.<sup>62</sup>

Remembrance is a focus of many school activities in the period before Remembrance Day. In some provinces (including Ontario and Alberta) the importance of keeping children in school to celebrate Remembrance is precisely the reason that Remembrance Day is not a school holiday (Carr 2003:77; Iqbal 2010:93). While education is a provincial jurisdiction in Canada, national institutions promote the same Remembrance discourse in the form of teachers' guides to Remembrance disseminated by the Canadian Legion and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs; poster and essay contests organized by the Legion and Veterans Affairs; pilgrimages organized by Veterans Affairs and by volunteers across Canada; and further curriculum materials and youth workshops organized by the Vimy Foundation. Since the millennial revitalization of Remembrance, there has been an increased effort to include youth in Remembrance rituals and pilgrimages. In 2006, Veterans Affairs introduced a new "pilgrimage model". It was already an established practice for the Ministry to organize pilgrimages for veterans to overseas battlefields and cemeteries; in the new model, all pilgrimages (where possible) now include a youth contingent (Bormanis 2010:262). In the Veterans Affairs "Service of Remembrance" (VAC n.d.c)

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62 Canadian Remembrance has rarely been studied in terms of its work on what Sara Matthews has called (regarding the Canadian War Museum) "the moral development of children and youth" (2009:50). Exceptions are Matthews 2009 on the War Museum, Carr 2003 on classroom activities, Iqbal 2010 on school assemblies, and Djebabla-Brun 2004 on the representation of WWI in French-Canadian school textbooks up to 1998. The role of children in commemoration between the world wars has been briefly noted in studies of France (Prost 1997:33; Sherman 1998:455) and Canada (Vance 1997:238-40). Vance observes that schools and children played leading roles in Armistice Day ceremonies; war monuments were built on school grounds; and patriotic war art was sent by the IODE (Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire) for display in schools.

– the suggested ritual for ceremonies on Remembrance Day and on official visits to war cemeteries – a new "Commitment to Remember" was added, to be recited by youth present at the service:

They were young, as we are young,  
They served, giving freely of themselves.  
To them, we pledge, amid the winds of time,  
To carry their torch and never forget.  
We will remember them.

In these activities, youth are not only being encouraged to mourn dead soldiers. These Remembrance activities teach youth that soldiers, including contemporary soldiers, are exemplary Canadian citizens; that Canada owes its identity to war; that war is necessary for peace; and that the essential acts of war are suffering and dying. Moreover, what is being taught is a particular affective orientation – the feeling rules of Remembrance (see Hochschild 1979) or what is considered an appropriate emotional response to topics of war and the Canadian military. One of the ways that this affective order is promoted is through appeals to the emotional bonds of family life. In this dual sense of teaching emotion and using emotion to teach, we can identify an affective pedagogy of Remembrance.<sup>63</sup>

### **Affective Pedagogy (1): Family Values**

One of the reasons for the popularity of Remembrance is its function as a vehicle of family

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<sup>63</sup> For more on the term "affective order" see the first section of Chapter 3. The notion of affective pedagogy is partly inspired by Prost's (1997) description, cited earlier in this chapter, of French post-WWI commemoration as "civic pedagogy" (329). My use of "affective" with reference to pedagogy is intended to convey the dual practice of inculcating an affective orientation and employing affect to teach.

values, particularly its moral lessons to youth that they should respect and be grateful to their elders. Consider for example the Bell Canada advertisement in 1997 that was immensely popular and broadcast on TV for a number of years in the weeks before Remembrance Day (Carr 2003:65). A young man is walking with a backpack on a beach in France. He uses a cellphone to call his grandfather and tells his grandfather that he is in France. His grandfather asks him if he is enjoying the girls in Paris. The grandson says, "Actually, I'm not in Paris. I'm in Dieppe."<sup>64</sup> The grandfather is flustered, and we see a photograph on his table that shows him as a WWII soldier. Grandson says: "I guess I'm calling to say thanks, Grampa." Grandfather says: "It's great of you to call. Thank you." The commercial ends with the Bell logo and slogan of the time: "Connect to the things that matter".

Interestingly, the cellphone in this case is the vehicle for two acts of remembrance: remembering war and remembering Grampa. The Bell ad points to how the revitalization of Remembrance has been used to address elders' anxieties about contemporary youth, anxieties that are often expressed in the form of concerns about youths' attachments to new technologies. These technologies signify the potential of youth to be selfish and ignorant of reality. For example, in the booklet of visitors' comments (Ferguson 2001) that was produced from the first *Canvas of War* art exhibit in Ottawa, one of the selected comments states:

This is an extremely moving exhibit. I wish every young person could see this. As my wife said: 'this poor boy/man died at twenty three, while some people at that age, their greatest concern is a cell phone.' Unforgettable.

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<sup>64</sup> Dieppe is a French port that was the site of a disastrous Allied raid on occupying German forces in August 1942. More than half of the Allied troops (predominantly Canadians) were killed, wounded or taken prisoner.

The comment expresses the idea that learning about war would be a good corrective lesson against the spoiled or selfish character of modern youth. The idea of youth learning a moral lesson from depictions of war is endorsed by Jack Granatstein, the Director of the War Museum at that time, in his introduction to the booklet.

I was struck by the way young Canadians perceived the exhibition... The images of death hit them very hard. They realized that war is not the game that it is made to be in countless TV dramas and movies, where victims are actors who come back to life (Granatstein 2001:2).<sup>65</sup>

A further example of the intergenerational moral appeal of Remembrance is the story "Mark's First Poppy" in the Legion Teachers' Guide, already mentioned above. In the story, young Mark is on his way home from school when he sees an old man in a uniform selling small red flower pins. When Mark gets home, he asks his grandfather what the old man was doing.

Mark sat on the foot stool in front of his Grandpa and was ready to listen carefully. "The man that you saw in the uniform was once a brave soldier," Grandpa began. (RCL 2008:31).

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65 *Canvas of War: Masterpieces from the Canadian War Museum, 1914-1918, 1939-1945* was an exhibit of paintings from the official Canadian war art programmes of the First and Second World War that toured Canada from 2000 to 2005 (see Oliver and Brandon 2001; Brandon 2003, 2007; Robertson 2001). One of the purposes of the exhibit was to raise public support for the campaign to revitalize the War Museum by showcasing the museum's artwork that could not be adequately displayed in the old museum building. The exhibit's curator, Laura Brandon, suggests that the Museum Director, Jack Granatstein, also hoped that *Canvas of War* would "restore pride" in the Canadian military (Brandon 2003:204). Brandon writes: "Granatstein recognized that the war art was the most accessible and acceptable means of doing this for a public that has an almost inbred distaste for all things military or that even hints at a martial past" (204; see also Robertson 2001:100-101). Jack Granatstein is recognized as one of Canada's most distinguished historians and is probably the country's best-known military historian. Prior to his academic career, he served in the Canadian Army for ten years. He has promoted public and academic interest in the military and a more aggressive foreign policy through books such as *Who Killed Canadian History?* (1998) and *Who Killed the Canadian Military?* (2004) which challenge popular national identifications with multiculturalism and peacekeeping. He was Director of the Canadian War Museum from 1998 to 2001, leading the institution from the aftermath of the Holocaust gallery controversy to the government's commitment to fund a revitalized museum.

The story introduces young children not only to the meaning of poppies but also, as mentioned earlier, to the idea that wars are fought for peace. Notice how the Remembrance themes of the story are communicated through an idealized family narrative which has a secondary function of teaching children to respect their grandparents.<sup>66</sup>

In a society that is anxious about its neglect of its elderly citizens, in which the pace and pressure of social change tend to alienate young from old, Remembrance has a powerful appeal for its potential to "connect" young and old, reminding youth that the old were once young and that the young too will grow old. Remembrance discourse gives expression to these desires for closer family and generational connections while directing and attaching these desires to the projects of nationalism and the sacrificial framing of war (see Damousi 2012).<sup>67</sup>

### **Affective Pedagogy (2): Pilgrimage**

As the major promoters of Remembrance, the Legion and Veterans Affairs encourage teachers to incorporate Remembrance themes in their history and social studies lessons. Historian Graham Carr raises the concern that such programmes "hardly seem designed to promote unfettered inquiry"; rather, Carr argues, they have the effect of "binding children to the past deferentially

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66 In particular, their grandfathers. It is Grandpa, not Grandma, who teaches Mark his moral lessons. Surely, Grandma could also teach Mark to sit and listen carefully, but it is Grandpa who knows the meanings of things of world historical importance, such as the reasons why wars are fought. A more thorough analysis of Remembrance (beyond the scope of this dissertation) should examine the important gender dimensions of the discourse.

67 Sherman (1998) makes a similar point about the articulation of war commemoration with other cultural practices, with reference to post-WWI France: "public commemoration found its justification in the private, individual practices it replicated and continued to facilitate. The emergence of commemoration as such involved subsuming such practices into discourses affirming the worth of very different sets of values, whether civic or religious" (460). This relates to Hobsbawm's (1983b) point on the topic of the invention of national traditions: "the most successful examples of manipulation are those which exploit practices which clearly meet a felt – not necessarily a clearly understood – need" (307).

through the ties of affection and family" (Carr 2003:68). Carr cites the example of a VAC kit for teachers which suggests that students research and represent former students from their school who fought or died in past wars. Carr notes that "the encounters that students are urged to have with the past are coded by a particular definition of commitment and sacrifice" (66). Students are increasingly learning about war, Carr argues, through uncritical, emotional experiences. The most remarkable example of this affective pedagogy is the model of youth pilgrimages to overseas battlefields that developed with the ninetieth anniversary celebrations of Vimy Ridge in 2007.<sup>68</sup>

The ninetieth anniversary of Vimy was marked by events in Canada and at the Vimy Memorial in France. On April 8, there was an all-night vigil at the National War Memorial in Ottawa during which the names of the 3,598 Canadians who died at Vimy were projected onto

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68 "Pilgrimage" is a common term in Canada (and throughout the Anglosphere) for trips to war cemeteries and monuments, especially when the main purpose of the trip is to perform a commemorative ceremony. The choice of term marks the journey as more significant than mere travel (Leite and Graburn 2009; Badone and Roseman 2004). The practice of pilgrimage seems to have originated with "salvation religions" such as Christianity and Islam, with the purpose of visiting sacred places associated with "the founder of a religion, his kin, disciples or companions, saints and martyrs of the faith" (Turner 1979:121). By extension, the term has been applied to secular travels that are characterised by "the seriousness of purpose with which the journey is undertaken and the anticipated lasting impact of its completion" (Leite and Graburn 2009:50). Anthropologists have deliberated on the distinctions between pilgrims and tourists (Leite and Graburn 2009; Badone and Roseman 2004; Turner and Turner 1978). D. Lloyd (1998) notes that, in Britain, "battlefield tourism" was a popular leisure activity (and labelled as "tourism") in the decades prior to WWI. He suggests that the relative decline of "battlefield tourism" and rise of "pilgrimage" after the Great War was due, first, to the fact that many of the post-WWI travellers were bereaved and engaged in an act of mourning their friends and loved ones; and second, the religious concept of pilgrimage was a logical extension of the wartime imagery of sacrifice whereby the soldiers who died were analogous to Christ (D. Lloyd 1998:24-28). As Turner (1979) notes, traditional religious pilgrimage centres are the sites of historical "redemptive self-sacrifice" (133). This is precisely how people throughout the British Empire were encouraged to regard the battlefields (and hence the nearby cemeteries) of the Great War. (Interestingly, D. Lloyd notes that during the interwar years the language of pilgrimage was rare in Canada compared to Britain and Australia.) Early post-WWI pilgrimages were organized by regimental associations and Christian organizations such as the Salvation Army and the YMCA. The first national pilgrimage to WWI graves and battlefields was organized by the American Legion in 1927 (see Budreau 2010:167-241) followed by the British Legion in 1928. Inspired by these examples, the Canadian Legion undertook its own national pilgrimage to coincide with the completion of the Vimy Memorial in 1936 (see Figure 10). The Canadian national pilgrimage (with 8,000 participants) was the largest of the British Dominions (see D. Lloyd 1998:198-207; Vance 1997:56-60). At some point following WWII, Veterans Affairs began the practice of organizing smaller annual pilgrimages for Canadian veterans to war cemeteries in Europe and Asia. The Canadian Legion also organizes biennial pilgrimages to cemeteries and battlefields in Western Europe. Both VAC and Legion pilgrimages now include a significant youth component. With the revitalization of Remembrance, pilgrimage has become encouraged as a rite of citizenship. The Legion states on its website: "making a pilgrimage is an experience that should be taken by every Canadian" (RCL n.d.b).

the Memorial one at a time from sundown to sunrise. Similar vigils were held in Fredericton, Halifax, Toronto, Regina and Edmonton (Bormanis 2010:263). On April 9, at the Vimy Memorial in France, thousands gathered (including the Prime Minister, the Queen, representatives of the Canadian Forces, and foreign dignitaries) for an official ceremony to rededicate the restored monument. Among the participants were more than 3600 Canadian high school students on a pilgrimage called the Birth of a Nation Tour.<sup>69</sup>

The youth pilgrimage to Vimy was largely the initiative of an Ontario teacher, Dave Robinson, encouraged by the new VAC youth outreach in its pilgrimage model. In anticipation of the 2007 Vimy celebration, Robinson and other volunteers organized schools across Canada to fundraise and support student-pilgrims on the Birth of a Nation Tour. Every student participant was assigned one of the 3,598 Canadian soldiers who died at Vimy, and was encouraged to research the soldier's story. At the rededication ceremony at Vimy, youth participants represented "their soldier" by wearing a uniform with his name on their chest (L. Miller 2006; see Figure 11).<sup>70</sup>

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69 Notice that in this case the trip was called a tour even though VAC, the Legion and the Vimy Foundation refer to their youth programmes as pilgrimages. This indicates a degree of conceptual overlap or slippage between pilgrimage and tourism that has been discussed by anthropologists (see previous footnote). In their review of contemporary Western Front battlefield travel, Baldwin and Sharpley (2009) observe that "pilgrimages" are focused on commemorative acts while organized "tours" are focused on historical education, i.e. "what happened and why" (191). In practice, most battlefield tours include aspects of pilgrimage, and vice versa. (For example, during the Ortona Christmas reconciliation, the Canadian and German veterans were taken on what was called a "battlefield tour" hosted by a local Italian historian.) In calling the 2007 Vimy trip a tour, perhaps the organizers were foregrounding the trip's educational value. Furthermore, Remembrance-themed trips for youth that are organized by private tour operators usually include visits to other cultural sites in Europe that are unrelated to Canadian military history, such as art galleries and Roman ruins.

70 The model established by this Birth of a Nation tour was repeated in 2008 in Ortona (see Chapter 9). The teacher who created the pilgrimage model (Dave Robinson) is now the National Student Tour Coordinator at EF Educational Tours Canada, an educational tour company that organizes overseas battlefield tours for high school students (see <http://www.eftours.ca/educational-tours/tours-by-region/canada-history-tours.aspx>). EF Tours is also the Official Student Travel Provider of the Vimy Foundation. Interestingly, the practice of youth adopting (or being assigned to) dead soldiers on pilgrimage to overseas war graves is also a practice in Australia (Fathi 2014). While contemporary Canadian battlefield pilgrimages have received (to my knowledge) no scholarly attention, the Australian phenomenon is a growing field of research (e.g. C. Winter 2009; McKenna and Ward 2007). A comparative project would be valuable.

Shortly before their departure on the 2007 pilgrimage to Vimy, a few youth participants were interviewed by the *Toronto Star* (L. Brown 2007). The article showed that the students had embraced the narrative of achieving national identity through war. Jonathan told the reporter: "Nobody took us seriously before, and then all of a sudden, little Canada tries to take the hill... and we win! It was the start of Canadian identity." Justin said: "At first I thought, big deal... But the more we learned from reading and speakers and just talking to older relatives, the more I got this whole 'Birth of a Nation' thing". The reporter was pleasantly surprised that the teenagers were capable of identifying with the low-tech methods of a war ninety years ago:

Ask this iPod generation how nearly 80,000 men managed to scale a hill four times the height of the Don Valley Parkway. They can describe in startling detail the secrets of how Canada succeeded where others failed. 'Of course there was the Creeping Barrage,' explains Atifa... 'Canadians shot artillery shells ahead of their line so they could walk slowly toward the enemy hidden by the smoke...' Don't forget the microphones the Canadians laid on the ground to figure out where the German artillery was... There was the way soldiers practised for weeks walking over replicas of rugged Vimy terrain, and rehearsed their positions and strategies (L. Brown 2007).

Once again we find the moral reassurance, provided by Remembrance discourse, that contemporary youth are learning to be good citizens and respect their elders – despite their cellphones or, in this case, their iPods. The youth demonstrate their moral development through their willingness to relate positively to war, by identifying with Canadian individual soldiers and battle tactics from long ago.

Student pilgrims to Vimy did more than identify; they were encouraged to **become** the dead. In uniforms and wearing the names of "their soldiers", the youth marched "in a long green column – at least 10 across – along the road leading to the front of the memorial" (Black 2007).

Earlier, the organizer Dave Robinson had explained:

When they march, they will no longer be our students... The students will be the soldiers they are representing. We (the adults on the trip) will be there for them – if needed – but the moment belongs to the soldiers, and that is what the students are bringing to this anniversary (Black 2007).

Students assembled in a cemetery at Vimy Ridge and were addressed by Veterans Affairs Minister Greg Thompson, who honoured the Canadian WWI dead, and said, "we must ask ourselves how different our country might be today, how different our world might be if those... Canadians had not made their sacrifice for peace, freedom—for you and me?" (Black 2007). The message of sacrificial death was reiterated by Prime Minister Harper in his speech at the ceremony at the monument. In front of an audience of dignitaries, veterans, Canadian Forces representatives, and thousands of Canadian youth dressed as dead soldiers, Harper said, "We sense, all around us, the presence of our ancestors". The Prime Minister described Vimy as a "spectacular victory" that was the birthplace of Canada, and concluded his speech by recalling the dream of the monument's designer, Walter Allward:

Allward said he was inspired by a dream. He saw thousands of Canadians fighting and dying on a vast battlefield. Then, through an avenue of giant poplars, a mighty army came marching to their rescue. 'They were the dead,' Allward said. 'They rose in masses... and entered the fight to aid the living...!' It is sometimes said that the dead speak to the living. So at this special place, on this special day, let us, together, listen to the final prayer of those whose sacrifice we are honouring today. We may hear them say softly: I love my family, I love my comrades, I love my country, and I will defend their freedom to the end (Harper 2007).

In effect, the youth dressed as dead soldiers were told they were bringing back the dead – or carrying out the mission of the dead – to carry on the war, and that doing so was an expression of their commitments to their families, to their country, and to freedom and democracy.<sup>71</sup>

The emotional reactions of youth pilgrims were praised by their teachers. Robinson said: "You see it in their eyes – the light in their eyes – the glistening of their tears. I live for these moments because they tell you as a teacher that they will never lose what they've learned for the rest of their lives" (Black 2007). Hamer Strahl said: "It really shows that the youth of Canada are very capable of remembering.... I think it says that they are willing to take responsibility" (Black 2007). In effect, just as the Vimy myth suggests that the battle was a national "coming of age", so was the 2007 Vimy pilgrimage imagined as a rite of passage for participating youth, who

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71 The 2007 Birth of a Nation Tour was a revival of beliefs and legends during and after WWI of returns of dead soldiers and a "deathless army" (see J. Winter 1995:54-77; D. Lloyd 1998:185-187). The return of the Vimy dead is also represented in Longstaff's painting *The Ghosts of Vimy Ridge* (Figure 9) which has been displayed at the Canadian War Museum and the House of Commons. This follows the soldier-as-Christ logic through to the resurrection. (As it says on the Stone of Remembrance in every Commonwealth War Cemetery, "They Shall Live For Evermore".) On one hand, this is conventional and reassuring; from another point of view, however, it is uncanny – especially from the standpoint of combat veterans rather than civilians. The image of undead soldiers, celebrated by Harper and the youth pilgrims in 2007 (and again in the 2008 Ortona pilgrimage discussed in Chapter 9), was for many soldiers a troubling outcome or expression of their traumatic combat experiences. "The otherworldly landscape, the bizarre mixture of putrefaction and ammunition, the presence of the dead among the living, literally holding up trench walls from Ypres to Verdun, suggested that the demonic and satanic realms were indeed here on earth.... The dead were literally everywhere on the Western Front, and their invasion of the dreams and thoughts of the living was an inevitable outcome of trench warfare" (J. Winter 1995:68-69). For example, Wilfred Owen was haunted by visions of dead comrades and enemies (see Chapter 3) as was at least one of the Ortona veterans whom I met (see Chapter 5). Indeed, the familiar Remembrance motif, emphasised in the poem "In Flanders Fields", of the dead who "shall not sleep" unless we propitiate them by "keeping the faith" is an implicit suggestion that death in war is not necessarily a "good" death, as the war dead are so prone to restlessness. Bloch and Parry (1982) note the widespread cultural belief that a person who dies a "bad" death becomes "a lonely and malignant ghost" (16).

Pilgrimages are not the only occasions in which Canadian youth are encouraged to embody dead soldiers. In fact, this pseudo-spirit possession occurs every time the poem "In Flanders Fields" is recited. The poem is in the first person plural – "We are the dead" – which can result in a powerful emotional effect when it is recited in unison, as nearly every Canadian public schoolchild will do in Remembrance Day assemblies. I can personally attest to Nancy Holmes's (2005) observation that "many Canadian children have felt a shiver of dread" during these group recitations (9). It is striking how much Remembrance compels children to think about and relate to death (and only eleven days after Hallowe'en). In her study of "dead-body politics", Verdery (1999) notes how political uses of the dead (through monuments and rituals) "evoke the awe, uncertainty, and fear associated with 'cosmic' concerns" (31). By associating itself with such "ultimate questions", the state gains an "aura of sanctity" (32). Anthropologists have often noted how symbols, values or discourses can be inculcated through rituals that provoke powerful emotions; those emotions can include fear, or the chill of the uncanny.

supposedly proved their maturity by embracing and performing adherence to the affective structure and meanings of the Remembrance discourse on war.<sup>72</sup>

The following are some examples of comments that youth participants provided to a reporter for the Canadian Legion Magazine (Black 2007) immediately after the ceremony at Vimy. First, notice how the "chilling" experience reinforced the war-making nation discourse ("what it really means to be Canadian") for one student-pilgrim:

Although I was thousands of miles away from home, I never in my lifetime felt so Canadian than I did at Vimy Ridge. Standing there united with 3,600 students from my country in front of the chilling memorial allowed me to renew my patriotism, this time understanding what it really means to be Canadian.

A second student-pilgrim reiterated the war-for-peace discourse:

I think it is really important for us to remember what happened and what people had to go through for us to have peace in Canada today.

A third experienced a closer bond with the present-day military:

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<sup>72</sup> Victor and Edith Turner (1978) suggest that Christian pilgrimages are "ritual analogues" of the initiatory rites of passage that are found in most tribal societies (3-4). As such, they argue that "a pilgrim is an initiand, entering into a new, deeper level of existence" through closer contact with "the basic elements and structures of his [or her] faith" (8,15). While secular pilgrimages do not always have this initiatory dimension (for example, I do not think that veterans who go on pilgrimages to battlefields and war graves regard themselves as initiands; they are certainly never represented that way) the Turners' observation certainly applies to the discourse around Remembrance youth pilgrimages. In the latter case, the youth are initiated into – or credited with achieving – a deeper level of citizenship through closer experience of the war dead. It is important to note that the youth are **regarded** as undertaking a rite of passage into a deeper level; the extent to which the youth actually **experience** this is an open question. In this dissertation, I rely on media reports for descriptions of the youth pilgrimages. If any youth-pilgrims had feelings that were dissonant to Remembrance, it is unlikely that they would share them with reporters.

Travelling to the Vimy Memorial and attending the 90th anniversary ceremonies has left me with an amazing new respect for all soldiers: past or present, fallen or still fighting.

A fourth spoke of the importance of sharing the experience and the message with others:

It is a great, great honour to be here.... It is important for us to pass on what we learn to our friends back home, and to our own kids when we get older.

Student-pilgrims may have already learned and embraced these ideas before the pilgrimage, but the emotional experience of pilgrimage is meant to make them more personally committed to Remembrance and eager to share it with others. Since 2007, more pilgrimages have been organized every year to Vimy and other European battlefields, with more than 15,000 students experiencing the model developed by Robinson, and many more to come – there are plans for a massive pilgrimage of 20-25,000 youth to celebrate the centenary of Vimy in 2017 (Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs 2011:4). Student-pilgrims are encouraged to become agents of Remembrance in their families, schools and communities. In 2011, Robinson told the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs: "I get emails all the time from parents asking what we've done to their child. They've come back changed" (Parliament of Canada 2011).<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> In the case of the Vimy Foundation, which also sponsors youth tours to Vimy, student-pilgrims are required to give presentations to their schools upon their return. The Foundation President told the Veterans Affairs Committee: "One of the requirements... is that we'll only accept winners in grades 10 and 11. We want them to be returning students. When they return to their high school, they're required to make a presentation to the school. We ask that they make presentations on Remembrance Day as well—and a great many do. These people come back changed, as Dave [Robinson] attested to. They do cooperate and they're proud to do that, so they seek out opportunities to speak at Rotary Clubs, and after school programs, or what have you" (David Houghton quoted in Parliament of Canada 2011).

## Recruiting the Nation

Following the Canadian military engagement in Afghanistan, Remembrance activities have increasingly been used to encourage young Canadians to identify with present-day soldiers. This process of "quiet militarization" (Dupuis-Déri 2010b) has happened in the context of the military's public relations campaign, launched in 2006, called Operation Connection.<sup>74</sup>

The purpose of the Operation – which Chief of Defence Staff Rick Hillier also called "Recruit the Nation" – was to increase recruitment as well as public support for the more aggressive combat role of the Canadian military in the Afghan war. In addition to television recruitment advertisements that "borrowed cinematic techniques from American war films, video games and geopolitical thrillers" (Fremeth 2010:69), the Operation "mobilize[d] local regiments to play an active part in as many urban and rural community events as possible: concerts, hockey games, charity dinners, fairs and even for no special reason just as long as they are seen in public spaces" (Fremeth 2010:56). One area of "connection" was through sports, as the National Hockey League Stanley Cup was taken to Kandahar and the military greatly increased its participation in the Canadian Football League's Grey Cup events (McKay and Swift 2012:250-251).<sup>75</sup> The Department of National Defence also sponsored a "support our troops" campaign that distributed yellow ribbon bumper stickers and other merchandise including bottles, shirts and hats with the "support our troops" logo (McReady 2010:44).

Meanwhile, the military became more "connected" to youth through Remembrance Day

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74 The term "militarisation tranquille" (quiet militarization) was coined by Dupuis-Déri to describe the militarization of Canadian society that still considers itself peaceful and maintains a nonviolent image of its soldiers. Dupuis-Déri's term is an ironic play on "la Révolution tranquille" (the Quiet Revolution), the name for the radical but mostly nonviolent social transformations of Quebec in the 1960s. The French word "tranquille" can also mean gentle or peaceful.

75 Thus, both Veterans Affairs and National Defence have a presence at CFL events, honouring veterans together with present Canadian Forces members. In another indication of the crossover between Remembrance and the military, General Rick Hillier is now (after retirement) the Honorary Chair of the Vimy Foundation.

activities in schools. For example, in 2009, students in Edmonton participated in a "trans-Canada Virtual Remembrance Day" ceremony that organizers described as a "celebration of the achievements and sacrifices made by past and present members of the Canadian military" (Iqbal 2010:100). Students in 14 schools from Quebec, Ontario and Alberta were linked via live video-conference with each other and with Canadian soldiers in Afghanistan. The Remembrance Day event included a discussion between one of the grade 8 students and the student's father who was serving in Afghanistan (Iqbal 2010:100). The event was repeated on Remembrance Day in 2010 with increased participation of approximately 10,000 elementary and high school students from 25 schools. The 2010 ceremony "was organized to honour the men and women of the Canadian Forces from past wars and peacekeeping missions, and those who are serving and have served in Afghanistan" (Government of Canada 2010). It included performances of songs, poetry, and art presentations by students from different schools, as well as opportunities for students to ask questions through live video feed to soldiers in Afghanistan.

Clearly, Remembrance is not only a practice of "remembering the past", as *The Globe and Mail* put it in 1998. Remembrance provides an emotional point of connection between Canadians and the present-day military. In Canada, learning to "remember war" entails learning an attitude to war that is meant to apply equally to wars past, present and future. Canadians were "remembering" the war in Afghanistan while the war was still being conducted; Remembrance was a mechanism for incorporating the Afghan war into the same essential story of the poppy. Consider how wars past and present are integrated in one of the first-place poems in the Legion's Poster and Literary Contest (RCL 2003:7):

The world's an adult playground  
 The bullies' features are blended  
 Into one evolving face  
 Hitler, Saddam, Al Qaeda, regardless of the race

Against the timeless unity of the foe, there is the timeless identity of the Canadian soldier:

Who cares enough to make the bullies stop?  
 We do.  
 The Canadian soldier.  
 Remember us,  
 And what we have always stood for.

McKay and Swift (2012) argue that Remembrance Day has been transformed since the millennium from a day of "solemn mourning" into an instrument of militarization (72). It may be true, as they argue, that twenty years ago Remembrance Day was more focused on peace. However, a closer analysis of Remembrance suggests that a propensity to "recruit the nation" has been in the discourse from its inception. In the poem "In Flanders Fields" there are only a few breaths separating the dead from the quarrel: "We are the dead / Short days ago... Take up our quarrel with the foe". The aggressive meaning of the poem's last stanza may be selectively ignored or forgotten (N. Holmes 2005) but it is there, ready to be activated – as it was originally intended and was received in 1915.

Farley Mowat, himself a WWII veteran who was shell-shocked near Ortona, perceived this quiet militarism in Canadian Remembrance. It "lies dormant", he told McKay and Swift (2012): "You see it in the monuments we erect to the fallen and carefully scripted remembrances – until it slowly slouches back into respectability" (258). Mowat did not elaborate, but I suggest that what

lies dormant in Remembrance – in the sense of what is powerful yet only vaguely perceived, taken-for-granted, experienced more as a feeling – is the sacrificial frame.

## Chapter Three: The Negation of Killing

### **Frame, Schema, Negation and Affective Order**

The sacrificial frame that I described in the previous chapter is what many anthropologists refer to as a cultural model or schema (Strauss and Quinn 1997; Garro 2007).<sup>1</sup> These are "learned internalized patterns of thought-feeling that mediate both the interpretation of ongoing experience and the reconstruction of memories" (Strauss 1992:3). As mental structures that organize knowledge and experience, schemas function as basic scripts and prototypes for situations and events, reducing what we need to learn, remember, and communicate (Quinn and Holland 1987:33).<sup>2</sup> Schemas, or models, are "orientational frameworks" (Garro 2007:62) that foreground some aspects of reality while backgrounding the remainder. In keeping with this visual metaphor, schemas and models can also be referred to as frames (Casson 1983; Tannen 1993).<sup>3</sup>

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- 1 The concept of schema was developed by Frederic Bartlett (1932) in his psychological studies of memory (Garro 2001, 2007; Tannen 1993). Schemas are shared to varying degrees; some may be unique to individuals. When a schema is widely shared, some anthropologists prefer to call it a cultural model (Quinn and Holland 1987; D'Andrade 1987:112-113). Bartlett emphasized that schemas are not static, they are "carried along with us, complete, though developing, from moment to moment" (1932:201). He preferred to call them "active, developing patterns" (201) but settled on the more convenient term "schema" adapted from Henry Head's neurological research.
  - 2 For example, I can tell a story about a man who went to a restaurant; I can say, "He ordered a coffee, stayed for two hours, and left no tip," and among those who share my restaurant schema there is no need for me to explain what it means to "order a coffee", there is no need for me to state that there was a server, and there will be a shared understanding that the man's conduct (leaving no tip) raises an ethical concern that calls out for certain culturally legitimate justifications, such as "bad service". (My example is inspired by a similar restaurant scenario employed by Schank and Abelson and quoted in Tannen 1993:18).
  - 3 While the concept of schema was developed by Bartlett through studies of memory, the concept of frame was developed by Gregory Bateson (1972 [1955]) following his observations of play among mammals. Bateson argued that psychological frames function in a similar way as picture frames in focusing our attention and selecting what information to include and exclude (187). Furthermore, Bateson argued that a psychological frame invokes a "premise system" whereby it indicates what sort of thinking should apply to the situation that has been framed (188). While the concept of frame has subsequently been applied in many fields, including linguistics and computer science, it is probably best known to social scientists from the work of Goffman (1974) who adapted it from Bateson and applied it to the study of social situations. Goffman seems to recognize the concept's similarity

For my purposes, the latter term is useful for two reasons. First, it is both a noun and a verb, so that we can speak for example of "socially shared framing strategies" (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:5), including how Canadian remembrance discourse "frames" war. Second, the image of a frame brings to mind the existence of a boundary that maintains an enclosure and an exclusion. Framing is an effort to call attention to a limited area of a domain, the rest of which is neglected, trivialized, barely registered and easily forgotten (see Zerubavel 2006; Kirmayer 1996). A frame is a "shared definition of the situation" (Kunda 1992:93) that imposes "limits to the scope of possible interpretations" (Irwin-Zarecka 1994:4) but it is important to note that framing distinguishes a domain that **merits** or **needs** interpreting from other domains that are marked as insignificant; that is, frames impose limits not only to the content of interpretation, but also to the scope of our interpretive efforts. Frames direct our attention, but the domain that is brought to attention might be open to a variety of interpretations. For example, in his analysis of the "agenda-setting" power of the press in 1963, Bernard Cohen observed: "It [the press] may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (B. Cohen 1963:13). In framing the news, the media tell us what is "at issue" (Gamson 1989:157) – and what is not. Indeed, excluding things from

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with Bartlett's schema when he refers to frames as "schemata of interpretation" (21), and he anticipates future work in cognitive anthropology (e.g. Quinn and Holland 1987; Strauss and Quinn 1997) when he suggests that cultures consist in hierarchies of interrelated schemas (Goffman 1974:27). Meanwhile, in the field of art history, Gombrich (1979) suggested that picture frames and similar design strategies "transform the meaning of the object they enclose" (169). Gombrich identifies two interrelated visual art practices: framing and filling. "The one [framing] delimits the field or fields, the other [filling] organizes the resultant space" (Gombrich 1979:75). Without reference to Gombrich, Tannen and Wallat (1993) have suggested a similar relationship between frames and schemas whereby framing would be the "definition of what is going on in interaction" and schemas would be "knowledge structures" that are activated by the frame-work (59-61). This conceptual separation of schemas and frames is useful for work in sociolinguistics (Casson 1983:433) that is concerned with analysing interpersonal speech events, but I do not think the separation is necessary for the analysis of larger scale discourses such as Remembrance. For my present purposes, I find it sufficient to think in terms of a single orientational framework (Garro 2007:62) which performs both of the functions that are treated separately by Tannen, Wallat and Gombrich – a duality that seems to have been present in Bateson's original concept – and I will use the terms "schema" and "frame" interchangeably.

significance may sometimes be the primary purpose of a frame; the interpretation of what is included may be of secondary importance – all that matters is that some meaning, any meaning is given to it, thereby diverting attention from something else.<sup>4</sup>

As such, frames or schemas can be motivated as much by an effort to avoid what is placed outside the frame as by an interest in whatever is inside it. They may come about through an effort to suppress, deny, or avoid a troubling reality. I refer to this suppression, denial or avoidance in general as the work of negation. Such negation may take the form of absolute silence. However, often there is a recognition and a willingness to speak of "the facts" while refusing to grant any significance to those facts, refusing to allow them to matter. This negation entails a management of affect; that is, a refusal to be affected, to show feeling or emotion in relation to the phenomenon that is subject to negation. Displays of emotion tend to draw attention and call for meaning; thus, the denial of affect facilitates the denial of attention (which also facilitates forgetting).<sup>5</sup> As such, a cultural schema is not only an organization of thought, it is also

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4 This approach to frames is similar to analyses of other social practices in terms of their diversionary functions. For example, in his analysis of ritual as "mobilization of bias", Lukes (1975) suggests that ritual "serves to specify what in society is of special significance, it draws people's attention to certain forms of relationships and activity – and at the same time, therefore, it deflects their attention from other forms, since every way of seeing is also a way of not seeing" (301). Sider and Smith (1997) use an aural rather than a visual metaphor, as they describe commemorative rituals as "attempts at closure at decisiveness and imposition, like the sharp report of a field gun at a military commemoration and the ringing silence that follows it: this is the sound of remembrance, this the silence" (7). In terms of discourse, Hall (1997) notes that "Just as a discourse 'rules in' certain ways of talking about a topic, defining an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write, or conduct oneself, so also, by definition, it 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic" (44). Hall's formulation is closest to my approach, as the diversionary work that he describes is not necessarily making things invisible or silent; in Hall's terms, discourse "limits and restricts", it does not abolish. By extension, I suggest that discursive limitation is a matter of employing different linguistic registers (see Bloch 1989; Besnier 1990) and other signifying practices that systematically displace or keep certain phenomena outside of our focal attention. This is precisely the flip-side of schematization.

5 Researchers have noted the close relationship between affect and memory. Garro (2001:112), drawing on Bartlett (1932:207-208), suggests that details of experience are retained more strongly in memory when they have an emotional impact. As such, Bruner (1990) notes that "affect regulation" is an important aspect of the "organization of experience" (55-56). The effort to detach oneself emotionally in order to avoid "having" an experience, and in order to forget, is a common psychological reaction to dissonant or disturbing events (S. Cohen 2001; Kirmayer 1996).

a cultural schematization of feeling – what I will call an affective order. The term "affective order" has a dual meaning, as order refers to both an organization and an imperative. This is a set of feeling rules (Hochschild 1979) that we are expected to follow (although the rules are usually implicit and taken-for-granted) and we may face a variety of social sanctions (shame, embarrassment or worse) if we transgress them.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, the sacrificial frame is also an affective order. In the previous chapter, I argued that this frame is promoted by Remembrance. However, it is not exclusive to Canadian Remembrance; we can find instances of it in other countries and in times prior to the development of Remembrance. While the history and extent of the sacrificial frame is beyond the scope of my dissertation, in this chapter I will draw on some instances of it from across the Anglosphere since the 19th century in order to examine some general patterns in the negation of killing. In the next chapter, we will return to the focus on Canada to observe these patterns at

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6 As I conceive it, "affective order" refers to a cultural schematization of emotional response. A number of anthropologists have suggested such a concept, using a variety of different terms. Levy (1984) suggests the existence of "affect programs" that are conventions that direct our emotional responses (223) with some emotions encouraged while other emotions are "underschematized" (219). Seeman (2005) employs the term "affective structure" (368); G. White (2005) suggests "focal emotion schemas" (248). All of these terms are similar to Hochschild's "feeling rules" (1979) which are "guidelines for the assessment of fits and misfits between feeling and situation" (566). The drawback to the term "rules" is that it sounds rather like a list of items that are not necessarily integrated, and it sounds rather explicit. This is a small issue, but I prefer "order" because it implies organizing, putting things in order, which can also be related to self-composure. My choice of this term was partly influenced by reading the letters of the British WWI soldier and poet Wilfred Owen (discussed later in this chapter). Owen received the Military Cross for his action in battle on October 1, 1918 when he captured a German machine gun and used it to kill numerous enemy soldiers. A few days later he wrote about the battle to his friend Siegfried Sassoon: "I cannot say I suffered anything; having let my brain grow dull: That is to say my nerves are in perfect order" (Owen and Bell 1967:581).

Affective order and similar terms may sound reminiscent of Raymond Williams' "structure of feeling" which Williams described as "a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension" of "characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships" (Williams 1977:132). However, Williams employed his concept to refer to feelings that are unsupported by existing social conventions; thus his concept is associated with "emergent critique" and affects that are "inchoate", "unarticulated", "barely within the semantic and political reach of their authors" (Stoler 2004:6). The term has the potential to be confusing, as really what Williams intended to describe are feelings that lack structure, that are kept out of structure (G. White 2005:243). As such, Williams' concept seems to apply to what Levy (1984) calls hypocognized emotions, feelings that lack cultural support and conventions for expression, in contrast to those that are hypercognized or culturally supported.

work in contemporary Canadian Remembrance.

### **The Logic of Negation**

In her study of the combat experiences of Anglosphere soldiers in 20th century warfare, Joanna Bourke (1999) observes:

The characteristic act of men at war is not dying, it is killing. For politicians, military strategists and many historians, war may be about the conquest of territory or the struggle to recover a sense of national honour but for the man on active service warfare is concerned with the lawful killing of other people (1).

It is a simple point, yet it is curiously overlooked in much discourse on war. Bourke argues that this "characteristic" act of war is commonly avoided by historians:

This fact is glossed over by most military commentators and denied by others. Accounts of the 'experience' of war prefer to stress the satisfaction of male bonding, the discomforts of the frontlines, and the unspeakable terror of dying. Readers of military history books might be excused for believing that combatants found in war zones were really there to be killed, rather than to kill (2).

Other scholars have also noted the pattern. In his study of the war memoirs of 20th century Anglosphere soldiers, Hynes (1997) observes that "there is almost no personal killing in them" even though killing is "the essential act that a soldier must perform" (66). Grossman (1996) suggests that the act of killing in combat is a "taboo" topic in American culture akin to the past repression, avoidance and silence on the topic of sex (xxix,36,92-93 and passim). Scarry (1985)

argues that "the main purpose and outcome of war is injuring" and observes that this fact tends to "disappear from view" in historical and strategic writings (63). Of the scholars mentioned above, Scarry offers the most thorough analysis of the mechanisms by which killing is negated – what she terms "the paths by which injuring disappears from view" (64). These pathways include omission (simply ignoring the topic); redescription via metaphors that distance us from the physical realities of the act and its impact on human bodies; and marginalization, whereby the act of killing is framed as a mere by-product that is tangential or "accidental" to the real purpose or essence of war (Scarry 1985:64-81).<sup>7</sup>

The relation of the sacrificial frame to the negation of killing has rarely been considered. In the passage quoted above, Bourke points to the emphasis on death that accompanies the negation of killing, but does not pursue the connection further. Meanwhile, when scholars of war commemoration give critical attention to the idea of sacrifice, usually they focus on how it distances us from the troubling material realities of death, not on how it distances us from killing (e.g. Vance 1997; Mosse 1990). Connerton (2009) seems at first to be noticing the negation of killing when he observes: "where soldiers are directly represented in war memorials, their image is designed specifically to deny acts of violence and aggression" (29). However, when he expands on his point, Connerton only mentions the soldier's **non-aggressive** act of dying: "They [monuments] conceal the way [the soldiers] died: the blood, the bits of body flying through the air, the stinking corpses lying unburied for months, all are omitted" (29). In his study of British Great War monuments, King (1998) briefly mentions killing as one of the "important aspects of [soldiers'] wartime experience" that were selectively displaced in war memorials, and notes that

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<sup>7</sup> Scarry contests this last strategy of accidental-izing killing by using the analogy of paper-making. The killing of trees, she notes, is not the ultimate end of the activity, but neither is it a by-product; it is a necessary intermediate step towards the end, and therefore essential to the activity (73).

some soldiers at the time mocked the analogies between themselves and Christ, saying for example, "I wonder if Christ would have stuck a bayonet into a German stomach – a German with his hands up? That's what we're asked to do" (quoted in King 1998:181).<sup>8</sup> When Benedict Anderson (1991) uses the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier as the point of departure for his influential study of nationalism, he mentions the soldier's act of killing only to deny its importance; in effect, Anderson reinforces the sacrificial frame in the very way he suggests that nationalism has motivated "many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die" and goes on to ask "what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history (scarcely more than two centuries) generate such colossal sacrifices?" (7).<sup>9</sup>

An exception to this tendency to overlook the relationship between the sacrificial framing of war and the negation of killing is historian Reid Mitchell's discussion of the US Civil War image of the soldier as Christ. First, Mitchell (1993) notes the affirmative functions of the sacrificial image. One of the appeals of the image, he suggests, is that it speaks to the real suffering of soldiers (147). Furthermore, the association of the soldier's suffering with Christ's act of self-sacrifice has the potential effect of providing "tautological reassurance" that the war is in a just cause; that is, the cause must be just if Christ would die for it (147). Then, Mitchell notes the negating function: the soldier-as-Christ image, he argues, served to obscure the "transformation of citizen into killer" (147). According to Mitchell, this transformation raised concerns among citizens of the Northern US states regarding how soldiers would be reintegrated into peaceful

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8 King also notes a controversy over the Bradford war memorial when it was unveiled in 1922. The memorial depicts "a soldier and sailor advancing with fixed bayonets" (207). At the time of the unveiling, the soldiers' postures and bayonets disturbed some people's images of the soldier. Bradfordians found ways to "pacify" the monument by interpreting the soldiers' postures as "advancing at the ready", not advancing to kill (208).

9 Anderson also overlooks the fact that many soldiers in national armies have not served "willingly". Vast numbers of soldiers in 20th century wars were conscripts, and even those who were volunteers were frequently subject to strong social pressures to enlist (such as the WWI white feather campaign – see Evans 2007).

society. The sacrificial image of the soldier allowed civilians – and perhaps soldiers themselves – to maintain that the soldier was not really contaminated by violence and therefore (if he survived) he could return to society unaffected.<sup>10</sup>

We find a clear use of "sacrifice" as a negation of killing in a pamphlet that was distributed to Anglican parishioners in England during the decade before the First World War. In "Religious Thought and National Service", Canon J.H. Skrine of Merton College, Oxford, wrote:

War is not murder, as some fancy; war is sacrifice. The fighting and killing are not of the essence of it, but are the accidents, though the inseparable accidents; and even these, in the wide modern fields where a soldier rarely in his own sight sheds any blood but his own, where he lies on the battle sward not to inflict death but to endure it – even these are mainly purged of savagery and transfigured into devotion. War is not murder but sacrifice, which is the soul of Christianity (quoted in Summers 1976:120).<sup>11</sup>

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10 The concern with "polluting" effects of killing exists in many cultures, even in cases where the killing is considered justified. Until the 12th century, the Catholic Church enforced penance for soldiers who had killed in war, which included denial of communion for up to three years (Contamine 1984:266-68). Soldiers who had killed in a "just war" during their lifetime were, upon their death, allowed burial in church cemeteries but their bodies were barred from the church interior due to concerns about blood pollution (Contamine 1984:289). Many Amazonian tribal societies require (or required) warriors who had killed to seclude themselves and engage in bodily practices such as vomiting and self-bleeding to rid themselves and protect the community from contamination (Conklin 2001). Among the Pokot (Kenyan pastoralists), a warrior who has killed "is thought of not only as polluting, but also as outright dangerous. When killing an enemy (pung) a shadow (rurwo) falls onto the person who has killed. This shadow condenses an array of supernatural dangers that may befall the slayer. If this shadow is not treated adequately, a disease called anges will slowly waste away the warrior. His untreated shadow inevitably destroys all fertility in his surroundings, that of women as well as of livestock" (Bollig and Österle 2007:34). Similar beliefs and practices exist among the Nuer (Sudanese pastoralists) (Hutchinson 1996:106-9). Keeley (1996) reviews many more examples: "Because he was a spiritual danger to himself and anyone he touched, a Huli killer of New Guinea could not use his shooting hand for several days; had to stay awake the first night after the killing, chanting spells; drink 'bespelled' water; and exchange his bow for another. South American Carib warriors had to cover their heads for a month after dispatching an enemy. An African Meru warrior, after killing, had to pay a curse remover to conduct the rituals that would purge his impurity and restore him to society. A Marquesan was tabooed for ten days after a war killing. A Chilcotin of British Columbia who had killed an enemy had to live apart from the group for a time, and all returning raiders had to cleanse themselves by drinking water and vomiting" (144). All of the above practices demonstrate cultural concerns about the harmful repercussions of killing "even when committed against enemies" (144).

11 The pamphlet by the British National Service League was in circulation from 1903; in 1911 it was distributed to 2,000 Anglican parishioners in Hampshire through their church magazine (Summers 1976:120). The National Service League was an organization that advocated strengthening the British army, in particular through compulsory military training for all men aged 18 to 30.

Here we see how the sacrificial schema entails the suppression of moral concerns about killing. Skrine's manoeuvre is quite interesting. He does not deny the fact of killing; rather, he denies its significance, by defining it as "not of the essence". This seems to be the strategy of marginalization identified by Scarry (noted above). But how can an audience be convinced that killing is non-essential to war? (And what is the meaning of an "inseparable accident"?<sup>12</sup>) Skrine's logic is that, yes, the soldier does kill, but the soldier does not really **experience** the act of killing: thanks to the "wide modern fields" of war, "a soldier rarely in his own sight sheds any blood but his own." This is an experiential, affective logic that reconciles war with certain pacifist tendencies in Christianity and enables a focus on the positive virtues of sacrifice. At the same time, the focus on sacrifice makes it easier to avoid the troubling topic of killing.<sup>13</sup>

In Skrine's discourse, we see how the sacrificial schema relies on a model of affect: death is the issue of war; it is the soldier's willingness to die that should move us; the soldier's act of killing need not concern us, need not affect us, because the soldier is distant from the act, not really involved in it. As such, the sacrificial schema is also an affective order – an organization of feeling and emotion, such that we are encouraged to **feel for** the act of dying and **feel nothing**

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12 Skrine is applying the classificatory terms of scholastic logic, which he might have learned as a theologian or from reading Fowler's *Elements of Deductive Logic* (1883) at Oxford. In these terms (derived from Aristotle) an accident is an attribute that is non-essential and not part of the definition of a thing. For example, red hair is an accidental attribute of humans. Some accidents are termed "inseparable" (or "necessary") because they always occur but are still deemed non-essential. (Fowler's example is "the blackness of crows".) For a critique of this "objectivist metaphysics" see Lakoff (1987:157-195). Lakoff argues, and most anthropologists would agree, that when it comes to matters of human social life (and much of nature as well) "the distinction between what is essential and what is accidental" is hardly objective; rather, the making of such distinctions is "a creative enterprise" (175) which in many cases is also political (including the issue of who has the power to define).

13 This might apply to ritual sacrifice as well (that is, in addition to the discourse of non-ritual self-sacrifice that is under consideration here). Valeri (1994) suggests that a key function of ritual sacrifice is to "justif[y] the taking of significant forms of life" (105). He notes that in many cultures it is or was considered a crime to kill an animal unless in a sacrifice, and he quotes an example from the Hindu Laws of Manu which state: "Killing in a sacrifice is not killing" (108).

about the act of killing. By feeling nothing about killing, we help to make it disappear, as if it does not and did not really happen. These are feeling rules that rely on or draw implicit authority from a particular construction of the modern soldier's experience.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Soldier's Experience**

Let us consider Skrine's contention that killing is marginal to, and even absent from, the modern soldier's experience of war. In his study of the experience of Western soldiers from WWI to the Falklands War, military historian Richard Holmes observes that battle "is relatively rare, and involves a small proportion of an army's soldiers" (1985:79). It follows that only a percentage of soldiers are placed in a situation of using violent force, and even for those soldiers, it happens rarely. It is also rare for them to see the enemy. Holmes quotes the WWII American combat historian S.L.A. Marshall:

The battlefield is cold. It is the loneliest place which men share together... utterly abnormal. [The soldier] had expected to see action. He sees nothing. There is nothing to be seen. The fire comes out of nowhere. He knows that it is fire because the sounds are unmistakable. But that is all he knows for certain (quoted in R. Holmes 1985:149).

Holmes quotes British soldiers from the First World War who observed that during battles "the

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<sup>14</sup> The history of this order is beyond the scope of my dissertation. It may be related in some way to Augustine's theory of just war. According to Weaver (2001), Augustine reconciled the Christian soldier's act of killing with Jesus's command to "turn the other cheek" by focusing on the soldier's interior disposition; if the soldier acted as an instrument of the state in a just war, and felt no malice towards the enemy while killing him, then – Augustine argued – the soldier did not really kill. In effect, Augustine's theory negates killing via appeals to just cause combined with the experiential detachment of the soldier. Of course, the history of the sacrificial frame is bound to be more complicated than a single theory of an ancient theologian. Even if the idea originated with Augustine (and I am not certain that it did) there is still the question of how it became a widely shared cultural schema at a certain point in history.

shrapnel barrage obscured visibility" and "people in England knew more of [the battle's] progress from day to day than we did" (149). Similar accounts come from German WWII soldiers and Americans in Vietnam, leading Holmes to conclude that "the individual soldier sees comparatively little" (R. Holmes 1985:151; see also Keegan 1976:46; Hynes 1997:12-15).

However, this only addresses what the average soldier experiences with his senses. There is still the issue of what the soldier might imagine. In her survey of the letters and memoirs of Anglosphere soldiers from twentieth century wars, Bourke (1999) observes:

What is striking is the extent to which combatants insisted upon emotional relationships and responsibility, *despite* the distancing effect of much technology.... When combatants did not actually *witness* the effects of their actions, they imagined it (7, 11-12).

Indeed, in these wars, infantry soldiers were certainly encouraged to imagine themselves as engaged in killing through their training. Bourke argues that the frequent cruelty of military basic training was aimed not only at teaching recruits to be indifferent to their own pain, but also at ridding them of sympathy for the pain of their enemies. She suggests that bayonet training played an important role in this process. The actual use of bayonets in battle was rare, but the weapon remained a powerful psychological device in training soldiers to kill. The British Army training manual in WWI directed instructors to make bayonet training as realistic as possible:

sacks for dummies should be filled with vertical layers of straw and thin sods (grass or heather), leaves, shavings, etc., in such a way as to give the greatest resistance without injury to the bayonet. A realistic effect, necessitating a strong withdrawal as if gripped by a bone, is obtained by inserting a vertical layer of pieces of hard wood (quoted in Bourke 1999:91).

American and British military instructors believed that bayonet training was particularly useful in fostering recruits' aggressive emotions, whereas the use of "bombs, grenades and bullets encouraged men to cower from the enemy" (92). An American draftee during the Vietnam War recalled his training:

They'd give you a rifle with a bayonet and they'd say, 'What is the spirit of the bayonet?' And you had to yell, 'To kill!' And, I'll never forget, I'd pantomime. I wouldn't say it. So, to make us say it louder, the sergeant would yell, 'I can't hear you!' People would scream, 'To kill!' And again I was pantomiming. Once, they said, 'If you don't say it louder, we're not going to give you people lemonade!' And, I'll never forget, at one point I yelled that the purpose of the bayonet was to kill – the first time I ever did that – and it was to get some lemonade because I was so exhausted and dehydrated (quoted in Bourke 1999:81-82).

An Australian WWII training document stated:

[The] whole basis of the new [training] system is KILLING – with the bayonet, which implies the production of a determined and capable man, who delivers his point under complete control of himself and weapon.... 'Pansy' flicks and dabs, wild and unbalanced thrusts etc. won't do (quoted in Bourke 1999:80).

Bourke suggests that such "[t]aunts about virility and competence could be irresistible to young, immature men trapped in hostile environments miles from home" (81).<sup>15</sup>

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15 For further examples of exploiting young male anxieties in basic training, see Dyer (1985:102-29) and Gutmann and Lutz (2010:39-55). In his chapter "Anybody's Son Will Do", Dyer suggests that "basic training is not really about teaching people skills; it's about changing them, so that they can do things they wouldn't have dreamt of otherwise" (1985:109). A key aspect of training involves the routinization of transgression. Chris Magaoay told Gutmann and Lutz (2010) that during his training in the US Marines, one combat trainer forced the recruits to scream, "Kill babies!" as their morning roll call (47). According to Dyer (1985), such language "is bloodthirsty but meaningless hyperbole, and the recruits realize that" but "it does help to desensitize them to the suffering of

Perhaps most soldiers went on to experience the strangely uninhabited battlefields described above by Holmes, where they shot from a distance at mostly unseen enemies. However, one wonders how they could forget such incitements to violence that they experienced and, in a way, were compelled to incorporate, in their training.

If it is indeed rare to see the enemy on the modern battlefield, that makes it all the more interesting that it has often been hard to get infantrymen to actually shoot at the enemy. Former US military psychologist David Grossman cites World War Two studies of American combat troops which found that a remarkably small percentage (15-20%) were actually firing at the enemy German and Japanese soldiers (1996:4). There seemed to be an unspoken understanding among WWII American front-line troops that some men were able to shoot and others were not, with the non-shooters finding ways to support the shooters by providing ammunition and alerting them to dangers and targets. Those remarkable findings prompted military historians to examine WWI and U.S. Civil War battles; the historians concluded that there were similarly low fire rates in those wars as well (27,33). In light of these findings, the U.S. military introduced new training and conditioning methods, which Grossman argues increased the fire rate of American soldiers (i.e. the percentage of combat troops who actually fired on the enemy) to 50% in Korea and 90-95% in Vietnam (Grossman 1996:35; see also Dyer 1985:118-20). In Grossman's opinion, this increased fire rate accounts for the increasing rates of traumatized combat veterans, which military psychologists tend to decontextualise (or de-moralise) as "stress" as if it were simply a case of "overwork" (36).

Grossman writes against what he calls a "cultural conspiracy of forgetfulness... that

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an 'enemy'" (121). By the end of training, recruits "half-inhabit a dream world in which they have not just seen dead people, but killed them themselves, again and again" (Dyer 1985:121).

obscures the very nature of war" (36). He notes the euphemisms that have frequently been used by American soldiers: "[T]he language of men at war is full of denial of the enormity of what they have done. Most soldiers do not 'kill', instead the enemy was knocked over, wasted, greased, taken out, and mopped up" (92). The purpose of such language, Grossman suggests, is to protect the soldier from the pain of his own conscience: "Killing is what war is all about, and killing in combat, by its very nature, causes deep wounds of pain and guilt. The language of war helps us to deny what war is really about, and in doing so it makes war more palatable" (93). Against both the colourful and the clinical language of avoidance, Grossman cites the testimonies of soldiers who have killed at close range. The most common reaction in these experiences was momentary elation, followed by distress. WWII veteran William Manchester described shooting a Japanese sniper:

I felt remorse and shame. I can remember whispering foolishly, 'I'm sorry' and then just throwing up... I threw up all over myself. It was a betrayal of what I'd been taught since a child (quoted in Grossman 1996:116).

Grossman observes that such close-range experience is particularly stressful because it makes denial of the enemy's humanity nearly impossible: "Instead of shooting at a uniform... now the killer must shoot at a person and kill a specific individual" (119). However, a small percentage of men with "aggressive personalities" (235) are untroubled by their experience of killing; they are able to kill "without regret or remorse" (180). Grossman is ambivalent about calling such men sociopaths; he suggests that many of these "natural soldiers" demonstrate strong social commitments and empathy for others during peacetime, and perhaps they are (somehow) simply better than others at reconciling their experiences and accepting the rationalizations for why they

had to kill (Grossman 1996:180-185; see also Keegan 1976:23-24).<sup>16</sup>

Grossman argues that most men, however, are deeply troubled by such experiences. From his perspective as a counsellor working with traumatized soldiers, he suggests that the culturally mandated "forgetfulness" of killing harmed his clients, as it made them reluctant to acknowledge and work through their pain (xxxix).<sup>17</sup>

Returning to Skrine's contention, it may be true that most soldiers in modern armies do not engage in front-line combat, and therefore do not "see" killing. Even in combat, the experience may be indirect due to technology: pilots see the destruction of other aircraft, not other pilots; tankers destroy tanks (Hynes 1997:88-89,141). Nevertheless, soldiers' awareness of their involvement in killing may be a significant aspect of how they experience war. Furthermore, militaries have made strong efforts to train their recruits to kill, and this training has focused not only on the practical skills but especially on overcoming men's emotional resistance to killing. Military leaders certainly would not want infantrymen to take to heart Skrine's words that the soldier "lies on the battle sward not to inflict death but to endure it". As the United States Army General Patton told his troops in a speech during the WWII battle for Normandy: "Now I want you to remember that no bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. You win it by making

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16 Based on their research with Israeli snipers who served in the Occupied Territories during the Al-Aqsa Intifada, Bar and Ben-Ari (2005) argue that most of the snipers actually humanized the "enemy" even as they killed them, yet this did not seem to cause most of the snipers more than "little traumas" (137), perhaps because the soldiers were so convinced of the morality of their actions, acting (in the soldiers' views) in legitimate defence of their homeland (149-150). This raises the general issue of the historical and cultural variability of both the inhibition against killing and the possible emotional trouble that might follow it. This issue is beyond the scope of my dissertation, but it should be noted that Grossman makes some universal claims about the experience of killing based on historically and culturally limited cases (mostly of 20th century American soldiers).

17 Garrett Reppenhagen, an American veteran of the Iraq War, suggested to Gutmann and Lutz (2010) that some Iraq veterans find ways to punish themselves when society fails (in their view) to punish them: "These guys are coming back and, since they don't receive that punishment from society, they punish themselves, and they start drinking themselves to death and doing drugs and being abusive to their family and committing suicide because they can't find that redemption" (145).

the other poor dumb bastard die for his country" (Beevor 2009).<sup>18</sup>

### **The Death-Centred Critique of War**

The negation of killing is a pattern even in critiques of war. Many anti-war discourses are centred on the soldier's act of dying, and constitute materialist rejections of sacrificial interpretations. In these arguments between materialists and idealists, there is a tacit agreement that death is the essential issue of war.<sup>19</sup> This is the case with some of the celebrated English soldier-poets of the First World War, notably Charles Sorley and Wilfred Owen.

Charles Sorley served on the Western Front from May 1915 until he was killed in October 1915. After his death, the poem "When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead" was found in his kit. Sorley's poem has been interpreted as a critical reply to Rupert Brooke's patriotic "The Soldier" and perhaps also a reply to the manner in which Brooke's own death was honoured.

Brooke was on leave for Christmas in 1914 when he wrote the following:

If I should die, think only this of me:  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is for ever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;

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18 This ironic aphorism seems to have entered the lexicon of US Marines drill instructors. See Dyer 1985:124.

19 My use of materialism and idealism with reference to war discourse is informed by Harari's (2008) study of Western "war culture" since the 15th century and particularly his discussion of "materialist pacifism" which emerged during and after WWI. Harari observes: "Materialist Pacifism set itself a goal to expose the spiritual deceptions that fuel war, assuming that if it only gave a very accurate sensory description of the realities of war without covering them up with some shiny spiritual gloss, people would no longer be willing to engage in war" (304). Harari argues that materialist pacifism fails because it relies on the same logic as positive revelations about war, which is that war is a revelatory experience that teaches us a greater truth. He notes that since WWI, Western nations have abandoned "positive images of war" yet these nations continue to promote war and celebrate their soldiers who fight (305). Harari suggests that during the past two hundred years there has been a trend in Western culture to focus on war as a learning experience but this focus on experience – even as a "negative revelation" – has made little difference to whether we conduct war or not. However, Harari does not specifically consider the negation of killing, a common oversight that I believe tends to limit the effectiveness of many antiwar discourses.

A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
 Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
 A body of England's, breathing English air,  
 Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
 A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
 Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
 Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
 And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
 In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

The poem was published in the *Times Literary Supplement* in March 1915, and was immediately popular; it was read from the pulpit in St. Paul's Cathedral on Easter Sunday that April. A few weeks later, Rupert Brooke died of blood poisoning on his way to Gallipoli. Winston Churchill, who was then the First Lord of the Admiralty, wrote the following valedictory for "Rupert" in *The Times*:

The thoughts to which he gave expression in the very few incomparable war sonnets which he has left behind will be shared by many thousands of young men moving resolutely and blithely forward into this, the hardest, cruellest, and the least-rewarded of all the wars that men have fought.... he was all that one would wish England's noblest sons to be in days when no sacrifice but the most precious is acceptable, and the most precious is that which is most freely proffered (quoted in Means 1999).

In Brooke's poem we see how the soldier's death becomes an occasion to celebrate the primacy of national identity. Brooke invites his readers to remember him, not as a poet, not as a son or a lover, not as a villager from Rugby or a citizen of the world, but **as an Englishman**. "Think only this of me" – he declares himself to be **exclusively** English – "A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware" – as if the nation were his true mother and father, the sum of all his

relations. Churchill replies on behalf of the nation, recognizing Brooke as one of its "noblest sons". This nationalist discourse does not denigrate the real parents of the sons; rather, it praises them for raising good sons who loved their country. Notice also that in praising the soldiers for their sacrificial love, the nation also praises itself as the inspiration of such devotion. Everyone seems to benefit in this nationalist circle of self-determining sacrifice.

Against this positive celebration of the meaning of the soldier's death, Sorley's poem intervenes with a resolutely materialist refusal of transcendence:

When you see millions of the mouthless dead  
 Across your dreams in pale battalions go,  
 Say not soft things as other men have said,  
 That you'll remember. For you need not so.  
 Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know  
 It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?  
 Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.  
 Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.  
 Say only this, 'They are dead.' Then add thereto,  
 'Yet many a better one has died before.'  
 Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you  
 Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,  
 It is a spook. None wears the face you know.  
 Great death has made all his for evermore.

Sorley tells the reader not to praise, not to grieve, not to honour the dead, because there is no value to it; the dead are dead and there is nothing more to say. We should be as mute as the mouthless dead. Sorley confronts us with the grotesque reality of death in war: mouthless, gashed heads, in an overcrowded mass – not at all like Brooke's "dust" washed by rivers and blessed by suns. For Sorley, it seems that the ugliness of death was sufficient to discredit the nationalist and religious celebrations of the soldier's sacrifice. It is a powerful poem, but notice that the argument

between Sorley on one hand, and Brooke and Churchill on the other, is essentially a disagreement over what it means to die in war. The matter at issue is death.

It is a similar story in the case of one of the most famous antiwar poems in the English language, Wilfred Owen's "Dulce Et Decorum Est". In his poem, written in Craiglockhart Hospital between 1917 and 1918, Owen describes how he witnessed (and continued to witness in his dreams) the death of a fellow British soldier during a gas attack.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*  
*Pro patria mori.*

The last line, which Owen calls a lie, means "it is sweet and right to die for your country" and is from a poem by Horace that was very popular among militant nationalists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Owen's poem is a more pointed criticism of war than Sorley's because Owen challenges the idea that it is **right** to die for the nation. What both poems share in common is their emphasis on the material reality of death as the basis for their criticism of war. Insofar as there is an argument with Brooke and Churchill on one side, and Sorley and Owen on the other, it is an argument between idealist and materialist interpretations of **death** in war.

While the meaning of this death as "sacrifice" is contested, the affective order of the sacrificial frame is reinforced as the war poets maintain the focus on the soldier's death with language that elicits an emotional reaction. Furthermore, the logic of sacrifice can also accommodate and overcome this materialist challenge. If sacrifice is about enduring pain for the greater good, then the more pain (or agony, or horror) that is suffered, the greater the sacrifice. That is, the idealist response to revelations about "horrors" of war can simply be to redouble the praise and honour bestowed upon soldiers for enduring it (Watson and Porter 2008).<sup>20</sup>

The silence on killing in these celebrated antiwar poems has been noted by literary critic Adrian Caesar (1993). Of Owen's poetry, Caesar writes: "The victims of war he portrays are implicitly innocent. We are told of men dying, we do not hear of the same men killing" (156). Of the British WWI war poets in general, Caesar writes: "Thus the suffering and horror endured by the troops ennoble them, redefining heroism as passive and masochistic rather than active and sadistic. The fact that those who were killed, often died whilst attempting to kill others is often elided from these writings so that 'sacrifice' can be seen as an act of love, rather than an act of appalling violence" (229).<sup>21</sup> Caesar concludes that Owen's popularity as an anti-war poet has had

20 In their study of the "ideology of sacrifice" in Britain and Germany during and after WWI, Watson and Porter (2008) observe that "the rhetoric [of sacrifice] survived because it had a logic that could accommodate the graphic material realities of the war... Far from disillusioning men, intense physical suffering could imbue sacrifice with greater meaning" (156). This reiterates one of the points about masculinity and sacrifice that I raised in Chapter 2. Notice also that in his eulogy to Rupert Brooke (quoted earlier) Churchill did not shy away from calling the war "the hardest, cruellest, and the least-rewarded". The eulogy is another example of the use of sacrificial discourse to contain the hardships and horrors of war by framing them as conditions that enhance the meaning of sacrifice.

21 However, there is evidence that Owen felt the dissonance between the sacrificial frame and his violent actions as a soldier. He expressed this more in his letters to his mother than in his poetry. Interestingly, although Owen's shell-shock in late April 1917 was attributed to his experience of being blown into the air and then spending time in a hole with the disinterred body of a fellow English officer (Hibberd 2003:240), it seems to have occasioned troubled thoughts about his own acts of killing. A few weeks after his mental breakdown, he wrote from the Casualty Clearing Station to his mother: "I have comprehended a light which never will filter into the dogma of any national church: namely that one of Christ's essential commands was: Passivity at any price! Suffer dishonour and disgrace; but do not kill" (Owen and Bell 1967:461). On August 13, a few weeks after arriving at Craiglockhart Hospital, he wrote: "I see clear at this moment.... There is a mote in many eyes... That men are laying down their lives for a friend. I say it is a mote; a distorted view" (Owen and Bell 1967:483). Notice his use

the insidious effect of forgetting the people and the movements that had actually tried to prevent and stop the war: "The greatest contemporary protest against the war was coming, as it always had, from the left-wing pacifists, some of whom had been imprisoned for their trouble" (162).<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Caesar argues that the attention given to these war poets reinforces the privilege that is given to soldiers' voices over those of noncombatants: "We, as an audience are asked to pity, but we are also implicitly told that we can't either understand or pity unless we too go and fight. Thus anti-war poems become in subtle ways war poems" (158; see also Harari 2008:7).<sup>23</sup>

In one of Canada's most famous antiwar paintings we find another implicit acceptance of the sacrificial frame. This is Fred Varley's painting *For What?* (Figure 12). Varley was an official war artist commissioned by the Canadian War Memorials Fund to document the Canadian actions on the Western Front in 1918 (Brandon 2007:46).<sup>24</sup> He visited France from September to November 1918 and observed the aftermath of the battles. In his painting *For What?*, Varley depicted that landscape of destruction. The painting is dominated by a cart in the foreground containing the bodies of dead Canadian soldiers. All that we see of the bodies is a twisted heap of legs that hang down from the cart towards us. The soles of their boots occupy the centre of the

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of the word "friend". While at Craiglockhart, one of the poems that Owen worked on was "Strange Meeting", in which he envisioned (perhaps from another dream, as in "Dulce et Decorum Est") being greeted in a deep tunnel by a dead soldier who tells him: "I am the enemy you killed, my friend. / I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned / Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed. / I parried; but my hands were loath and cold. / Let us sleep now..." The imagery in the poem seems to recall the physical scene where Owen was shell-shocked (Purkis 1999:107). While Owen is mostly known for "Dulce et Decorum Est", the Memorial to Wilfred Owen in his home town of Shrewsbury is in the form of a tunnel entrance and bears the inscription: "I am the enemy you killed, my friend" (Purkis 1999:141).

22 Indeed, how many of us know an antiwar poem by an imprisoned pacifist who had "sacrificed" his freedom in order not to kill?

23 They also have the effect of marginalizing women's anti-war efforts, as (until recently) it has been mostly men who have served in the military, especially in combat roles.

24 The War Memorials Fund was created by Lord Beaverbrook in 1916. The Fund commissioned Canadian and British artists to document, in Beaverbrook's words, "the great deeds and sacrifices of the Canadian nation in the war" (Vance 1997:102). A number of future members of the Group of Seven were commissioned. Fred Varley and A.Y. Jackson painted the Western Front, while Arthur Lismer and Frank Johnston painted scenes of the war effort in Canada.

picture. The focus of the painting is the grotesque reality of the soldiers' deaths, and the painting's title raises the question of the meaning of those deaths. As such, Varley's painting challenges the sacrificial interpretation of the war while at the same time reinforcing the death-centred framing of war. He wrote from France to his friend and fellow artist Arthur Lismer:

I was in Ypres the other day – in Maple Copse and Sanctuary Wood... I tell you Arthur, your wildest nightmares pale before reality. How the devil one can paint anything to express such is beyond me. The story of War is told in the thousand and one things that mingle with the earth – equipment, bits of clothing almost unrecognizable, an old boot stuck up from a mound of earth, a remnant of sock inside, and inside that – well, I slightly released the boot, it came away in my hand and the bones sifted out of the sodden rag like fine sand. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. I find myself marvelling over the metamorphosis from chrysalis to butterfly but I never get beyond marvelling (quoted in Oliver and Brandon 2001:69)

Varley was powerfully affected by what he saw of death. Notice, however, that what he experienced was a particular landscape of death, and on this basis he claimed to have understood "the story of war". There is no mention of killing in Varley's story, and his observations about the decay of human bodies could just as well have been made on the scene of a natural disaster. In this respect war simply becomes an occasion to reflect on the universal problem of mortality. Varley's concern with boots is akin to a memento mori, a reminder that human endeavours are fleeting and futile in the face of death. He also wrote about his experience with the boot to his wife Maud:

I could tell you for a month about Ypres – Sanctuary Wood – Maple Copse – Vimy Ridge, etc... but the subject is too big – it will dribble out in after-years.... Sanctuary Wood is the most fateful and tragic place on the whole front... a pool of water, green scum, bubbles rising... an old boot... It was fast

to a sock, scarcely distinguishable from the soil. I gave it a pull. The bones fell out in fine powder... and mingled with the soil (quoted in P. Varley 1983:56-57).<sup>25</sup>

Varley continued to Maud:

You in Canada cannot realize at all what war is like. You must see it and live it. You must see the barren deserts war has made of once fertile country... see the turned up graves, see the dead on the field, freakishly mutilated – Headless, legless, stomachless, a perfect body and a passive face and a broken empty skull – see your own countrymen, unidentified, thrown into a cart, their coats over them, boys digging a grave in a land of yellow slimy mud and green pools of water under a weeping sky (quoted in C. Varley 1981:38).

Here again, as with the war poets, we find a case of apparent war criticism that is powerful and certainly heartfelt but nevertheless has the effect of disempowering civilians on the basis that civilians do not know war from experience. When Varley's *For What?* was displayed in the *Canvas of War* exhibit from 2000-2005, these words to his wife were also displayed next to the painting. The booklet that was produced from the first exhibit in Ottawa and was distributed at exhibits in other cities across Canada (Ferguson 2001) included this comment by a visitor:

As an elementary school educator, I struggle each day to communicate the horrors of war to my students – access to work like this would at least give them some context – though, as Varley says 'We can never really know' (and we are blessed in that).

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25 The boot seems to have been an important symbol to Varley, noted also by his grandson Christopher who remarks on two other sketches that Varley made of dead soldiers: "Notice how Varley lingered over their boots and feet. Their 'sacrifice' had been futile and pathetic" (C. Varley 1981:38).

We are invited to agree that we should know and that we can never adequately know – and that the domain of our significant not-knowing is death.

## Chapter Four: The Affective Order of Remembrance

### **Telling 'Real' War Stories**

According to Remembrance discourse, the story of war is sacrifice and the achievements of sacrifice. How is that story told without being disturbed by troubling affects of killing? In this chapter, I will examine the work of negation within Remembrance. This work is done through a combination of silence, avoidant language, and affective framing.

One of the frequent claims in Remembrance discourse is that we are confronting the reality of war, even as we negate the characteristic act of war, which is killing. Consider for example the war art exhibit, *Canvas of War: Masterpieces from the Canadian War Museum, 1914-1918, 1939-1945* that toured Canada from 2000 to 2005. The title of the exhibit suggested that the topic was war. After the exhibit's opening in Ottawa, a booklet was produced for distribution at subsequent showings across Canada (Ferguson 2001). The booklet was a selection of visitors' comments from the first Ottawa exhibit, with an introduction by Jack Granatstein, the Canadian War Museum Director at the time. Granatstein suggested that the paintings confronted visitors with the "horrors of war":

Whether from veterans, schoolchildren, foreign visitors, or others of the approximately 300,000 who saw *Canvas of War* during its eleven months at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, the individual comments almost always reflected a profound reaction to the horrors of war as depicted by the artists. Words like "sadness", "never again" and "sacrifice" appear consistently in the thousands of comments that are to be found in the comments book (Granatstein 2001:1).

Indeed, the comments included in the booklet reflect a range of responses to war that are consistent with Remembrance discourse. As the curator Laura Brandon suggests, the *Canvas of War* exhibit was regarded by many visitors as "a memorial site – a place to remember" (2003:10). There are four noteworthy and related sentiments that recur in the published comments. (Of course, these are patterns in the comments that were selected for inclusion in the booklet; there may have been other visitor comments that were inconsistent or discordant with Remembrance themes.) First, there is national pride:

Very moving – I'm proud to be Canadian, even more after this display

Un peuple courageux, héroïque à l'esprit humanitaire! Quel autre peuple a plus fait que le canadien

Second is gratitude for the "gift" that was given by the soldiers:

A fitting tribute to those who made us a gift of a future

Increasingly sad at the realization of all that was given so freely in terms of human life. I can only hope that in some small way we are able to keep the hopes and dreams alive.

Third is the renewal of family bonds through Remembrance:

My great-grandfather was in WW1 and my grandfather was in WW2, both in France. Although both of these men are gone, your exhibit has given our sons a glimpse of this period of history. Thank you.

Although I walked through this exhibition alone, my father was next to me every step of the way.

Fourth is the horror of war:

The faces of war, esp. the faces of suffering and death, brought me to tears.

The pictures moved me. It must of been awful seeing your friends die in the war [sic].

I wept. Gorgeous paintings full of beauty and horror – a powerful legacy for peace.

I'm Melanie. I'm 5 years old. I think the paintings are nice and I learn how terrible war is. And the soldiers wer very brave [sic].

Notice that one of the comments above invokes the experience of "seeing your friends die". The focus on the deaths of fellow Canadians was encouraged by Varley's painting *For What?* (Figure 12) which was included in the exhibit accompanied by the text of Varley's letter to his wife (quoted in the previous chapter) in which he asserted: "You in Canada cannot realize at all what war is like. You must see it and live it." As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the visitor comments noted the value of Varley's painting and the other artworks for teaching "the horrors of war":

As an elementary school educator, I struggle each day to communicate the horrors of war to my students – access to work like this would at least give them some context – though, as Varley says 'We can never really know' (and we are blessed in that).

As noted earlier (Chapter 2), the Museum Director Jack Granatstein also suggested the exhibit's value in educating youth about the reality of war:

I was struck by the way young Canadians perceived the exhibition... The images of death hit them very hard. They realized that war is not the game that it is made to be in countless TV dramas and movies, where victims are actors who come back to life (Granatstein 2001:2).

Visitors were encouraged to believe that the exhibit had confronted them with the realities and horrors of war. It is therefore significant that not a single painting in the exhibit confronted the visitor with an act of killing. Granted, there were a few paintings of combat scenes. In these scenes, Canadian soldiers were depicted firing their weapons, suffering wounds, dead or dying. One could argue that depictions of soldiers firing their weapons are in effect representations of the act of killing, but these are very limited representations that do not show the resulting impacts on the bodies of the enemy. Nothing in the exhibit confronted the visitor with knowledge or experience of what Canadian acts of violence do to others.

In *Canvas of War*, the act of killing was obscured and marginalized by visual means simply by keeping it largely outside the pictorial frame. In verbal media, the same result is achieved by the use of language that is either euphemistic or maintains a degree of abstraction. The poem "In Flanders Fields" employs an obvious euphemism in the line, "Take up our quarrel with the foe", as if we were having an argument with the Germans, fighting them with words rather than

damaging and destroying their bodies with bullets, bombs and bayonets. The terms of the poem are archaic to contemporary ears; the contemporary language for describing battle is plainer, yet none the less avoidant. Consider this passage from a booklet, "Valour Remembered: Canada and the First World War", produced by the Department of Veterans Affairs. We are told in "The Aftermath":

Nearly one of every ten Canadians who fought in the war did not return. It was this Canadian war record that won for Canada a separate signature on the Peace Treaty signifying that national status had been achieved. Nationhood was purchased for Canada by the gallant men who stood fast at Ypres, stormed Regina Trench, climbed the heights of Vimy Ridge, captured Passchendaele, and entered Mons on November 11, 1918 (Giesler 1995:27).

There are action words that evoke struggle, determination, forceful activity, but none of those words necessarily refers to violent action that causes physical wounds, death and destruction. On the contrary, "standing fast", "storming", "climbing", and "capturing" could be descriptions of a football game, or even just some kind of struggle with the natural elements. These words enable the reader to avoid visualising and contemplating what it actually meant in physical embodied terms – in terms of our embodied relationship with the enemy soldiers – to "win" our "national status" in World War One.<sup>1</sup> What is being avoided is the logical consequence of what is being suggested in the text: that Canadian identity was achieved through the (legally-sanctioned)

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1 Scarry (1985) notes that descriptions of war tend to avoid confronting "actual injury in the sentient tissue of the human body" (80). Some of the "paths by which injury disappears from view" (64) include metaphorical representations of human bodies as vegetable or metallic tissue (66); a narrative focus on machines (67); and a treatment of armies as collective individuals with bodies that are collectively (and only metaphorically) wounded (70). I agree with Scarry that these conventions often arise from "purposes appropriate to these writings" (71) in which the aim is to discuss large-scale strategy and outcomes of war, not the experiences of individual soldiers. Nevertheless, my point (which I share with Scarry) is that even when these conventions are not intentionally designed to obscure the violence that is done to human bodies, they still facilitate avoidance of that issue.

murder of Germans. That is what Canadian soldiers had to do, and do more successfully than their German counterparts could do to them. Of course, in order to do it more successfully, they needed better tactics; but to speak only of tactics is to forget what the tactics were for. These were not manoeuvres on a chess board, and Canadians did not take Vimy Ridge by dying. The language of the text allows us to "forget" or never to "know" that the storming and the capturing were also, and more precisely, acts of killing. The text facilitates our innocence of killing so that we can enjoy the story of our national achievement without suffering any emotional discomfort.<sup>2</sup>

Through its website, the Vimy Foundation provides educational material about the battle of Vimy Ridge that encourages youth to celebrate Canadian aggression without being affected by the issue of killing. For example, on the famous creeping barrage that initiated the Canadian attack, students can read: "Behind the barrage, the men moved forward over the badly broken ground.... Stunned by the Canadians' success, the Germans retreated" (Vimy Foundation 2012c). In this discourse, only the ground is badly broken. The Germans are "stunned" but not mutilated and killed. The Foundation website provides an "interactive, multimedia experience" designed for teachers and students, called Vimy REAL (Vimy Foundation 2012d). To the sounds of explosions, shots, and men's shouts and cries, visitors can view texts and images about different aspects of the battle. In the unit on Tactics, we read: "The bombardment keeps the enemy pinned in their bunkers and trenches". There are six long testimonies from soldiers' letters describing the bombardment. Only one of the testimonies (from Olivar Osselin) mentions a German victim, and in a possibly humorous tone: "From time to time a German could be made out, arms and legs extended, often his posterior facing the sky". Another point in Tactics notes the "countless acts of

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2 My words here on innocence are inspired by Bollas's observation (quoted in S. Cohen 2001:24-5) that "Each of us is aware in ourselves of the workings of denial, of our need to be innocent of a troubling recognition".

individual initiative on the battlefield: the ability to assess a situation, take charge, and see it through, regardless of the threat to one's life". The point goes on to identify four Victoria Cross recipients, without describing what they did to earn the award. We get some idea from another point: "Hill 145, where the Vimy monument sits today, was taken by Canadians in a frontal bayonet charge against German machine-gun positions". It is as if the main activity of bayonets was to **take a hill**, without necessarily having any impact on German **bodies**. Of course, any reasonable person knows what the bayonets were supposed to do to the German enemy but the Vimy REAL narrative allows us to avoid that knowledge, even as we focus on battle tactics. Elsewhere on the Vimy Foundation website, we do find mention of killing on a page devoted to the Victoria Cross winners. Of Private William Milne, we read: "he managed to reach the gun, kill the crew, and capture the gun". Of Lance-Sergeant Ellis Sifton, we read: "he charged it single-handed, killing all the crew" (Vimy Foundation 2012e). These stories are framed as "examples of conspicuous bravery" and are outside the main educational tool for teachers and students. Inside the Vimy REAL active learning experience, which takes approximately one hour to complete, we read extensively of bombs, guns and bayonets, but we are never confronted with an act of killing apart from a single mention of a German posterior blown into the air.

It is remarkable to think that so many Canadian youth might learn to celebrate a battle, including its tactics, without ever contemplating the issue of violence done to others. Some, at least, must experience moments of dissonance. One such moment was reported in a *Toronto Star* article on the Birth of a Nation pilgrimage to Vimy. After lauding the students' knowledge and enthusiasm for the Vimy battle tactics such as the creeping barrage, the article described one student's moment of discomfort:

Still, the thought of the weapons used rattles student Laura Cerullo. 'We're peacekeepers. That's how I always envision Canada,' said the Grade 12 student... who got to see a bayonet blade and other World War I gear this week at school... 'I can't imagine Canadians with bayonets' (L. Brown 2007).

Laura did not have a problem imagining Canadians using artillery, but she was troubled by the bayonet. The bayonet challenged her idea of Canadians as peacekeepers. It is interesting that her idea of Canadian peacekeeping had not been challenged by her history lessons about the causes of WWI and the capture of Vimy Ridge. Perhaps, during those lessons, Laura had some misgivings, but it was the bayonet that brought her cognitive dissonance into the open. "I can't imagine Canadians with bayonets," she said. I believe that the bayonet is troubling not only because it is a blade, but also – I think especially – because it forces us to face the fact that soldiers kill. With the bayonet, there can be no pretending (as in Canon Skrine's discourse) that technology does the killing and soldiers merely die. Laura saw the bayonet and it dawned on her that the Canadian soldiers were not bringing "peace" on Vimy Ridge.

Moments of dissonance that threaten our self-concept and our good relations with others are often suppressed and put behind us. Such a manoeuvre happens in the *Toronto Star* article. After reporting Laura's discomfort, the story promptly moves on to a familiar and comforting conclusion:

Victoria Park students plan to lay a wreath on the grave of "their soldier," Corporal John Lawrence-Weatherall... They will hold a candlelight vigil at his grave in the Cabaret-Rouge cemetery in France, and hope some day to be able to locate his descendants to present them with the photos (L. Brown 2007).

From the discordant feeling that briefly interrupted the sacrificial frame, we find our way back to grieving and honouring the Canadian soldier who died. The affective order of Remembrance is restored, and the troubling thought of killing is "forgotten".

### **War Museum (1): An Emotive Institution**

The new Canadian War Museum (2005) is a prime example of the sacrificial framing of war narratives by Remembrance discourse.<sup>3</sup> The museum itself is a product of the revitalization of Remembrance at the turn of the millennium. The movement to revitalize the original war museum (established in 1880) in a new building was galvanized in 1997-1998 when veterans' groups successfully lobbied against proposals to add a Holocaust gallery to the old museum. Veterans' groups argued that a Holocaust gallery was beyond the museum's mandate to tell the story of Canadians at war (Dean 2009:2). The campaign against the Holocaust gallery focused

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3 Public museums such as the CWM are valuable objects of analysis because they "materialize values and throw the processes of meaning-making into sharp relief" (R. Mason 2008:18). The CWM is both a "contact zone" (see Clifford 1997:188-219) and a pedagogical structure. First, as a contact zone, the CWM provokes debates and conflicts among groups with different perspectives on war; we see this in debates on the mandate of the museum among veterans and peace activists, and in responses to various permanent and special exhibits (e.g. the WWII Bombing Campaign, Afghanistan and Peace exhibits that I will discuss later in this chapter). Second, as a pedagogical structure, the CWM is "a means of governmentality through which values and notions of citizenship and publics are inculcated, imposed, and portrayed through exhibition design and behavioral habits as well as exhibition topics and themes" (Kratz and Karp 2006:23). The CWM is akin to a ritual space in the sense that it is structured to move the visitor through a liminal experience into a transformed, enlightened state (Duncan 1995:1-13). My study of this function of the museum draws on Kratz's (2011) method of analysing museum "rhetorics of value" – the means by which architecture and exhibit design encourage "ways of seeing and thinking" (29) (to which I add feeling, following G. White 2005) through a "mixed discourse of images, words, and spatial distribution" (Bal 1992:592).

Studies of war museums in Western Europe (Arnold-de Simine 2006, 2013; J. Winter 2012; Whitmarsh 2001), Australia and New Zealand (J. Winter 2012) and the USA (G. White 1997, 2000b) have noted their combined pedagogical and memorial functions. In her studies of the Imperial War Museum (London), Imperial War Museum North (Manchester), In Flanders Fields Museum (Ypres), and the Militärhistorische Museum (Dresden), Arnold-de Simine observes that war museums in general focus more on conveying the experience of war rather than the political and economic causes of wars (2013:86), but this effort to provide a "sensual experience" of war is limited by museums' needs to be "sympathetic to the national or individual self-image" of their visitors (2006:303). As such, there is a tendency to sanitize war even as museums attempt to convey wars' realities (J. Winter 2012:153).

attention on the perceived inadequacies of the existing museum, which Canadian Legion members had decried since 1988 as too small for its collections and undervalued by governments and museum administrators (MacGregor 2001; Sarty 2007). The controversy over the Holocaust gallery drew the Canadian public's attention at a time when interest in and sympathy for veterans was already high, following the fiftieth anniversary of the end of WWII (1995) and "public anxiety over the rapidly diminishing numbers of veterans from the two world wars" (Dean 2009:3). In 2001, the federal government announced plans for construction of a new Canadian War Museum on the LeBreton Flats near the Parliament Buildings on the Ottawa River. Veterans' groups raised \$16.5 million towards the \$120 million cost of the new building which opened on May 8, 2005 (Dean 2009:3; MacGregor 2001).

The new War Museum was designed to function as an emotive institution. The concept of emotive institution has been developed by Geoffrey White in order to identify "discursive practices that variously evoke, represent, and transform emotional experience" according to a "focal emotion schema" (2005:248-9). The museum is mandated to educate Canadians about war, with an emphasis on experience. According to the museum's document "The Canadian War Museum at a Glance – 2007":

The Museum's exhibition galleries and public programs have been designed to emphasize the human experience of war in order to explain the impact of organized human conflict on Canada and Canadians past and present and to show how, through war, conflict, and peace-support operations, Canadians have affected and been affected by the world around them (CWM n.d.c).

While the museum seeks to represent how Canadians have been affected, it also seeks to affect Canadians in a manner that reinforces the order of Remembrance. In particular, visitors to the

museum are encouraged to identify with the experience of soldiers as defined by Remembrance – that is, an experience that is unaffected by killing.

The central emotive purpose of the museum design is clear in the architect Raymond Moriyama's description of his intentions: "My objective... was to create a building that not only enhances the exhibits and the institution, but also moves visitors emotionally... to think, to question... I want visitors to confront some dark truths and come away feeling rejuvenated, full of resolve, small or big, to face the future" (Moriyama 2006:48). For his design inspiration, Moriyama toured the battlefields of WWI in France and Flanders and reflected on the power of nature to rejuvenate the devastated landscapes of war.<sup>4</sup> He settled on a design theme of "regeneration" according to which the museum would "house the memories of devastation and sacrifice while expressing the power of survival and rebirth" (45). The theme of regeneration is expressed first of all in the outer appearance of the museum "which emerges slowly from the landscape" with a "grass-covered roof and low profile" (CWM n.d.a). The roof rises to a peak in the east, facing the Peace Tower of the Parliament Buildings and thus signifying a desire for peace (see Greenberg 2008:192-196).<sup>5</sup>

Inside the museum, the permanent exhibitions are designed to "explain Canada's rich

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4 Moriyama was also inspired by his own childhood experience of nature. As his family was Japanese-Canadian, they were subject to forced internment in 1941. "My father refused to be separated from my pregnant mother, my two younger sisters and myself, so he was arrested and sent to a POW camp in Ontario; my mother then had a miscarriage and I lost the only brother I ever could have had" (Moriyama 2006:1). While at the internment camp, Moriyama found solace by building a treehouse in the forest beside the Slocan River. During the construction of the new museum building, the wind around the construction site reminded Moriyama of the "eerie yet comforting" sound he remembered from his treehouse in the wilderness; he recorded the sound to be played in the museum's Regeneration Hall (109).

5 In summertime, visitors can walk on the roof and experience themselves physically "rising up" from war to peace (Greenberg 2008:195). Greenberg describes the CWM as "a building that attempts to disappear" (192) and compares it to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC (see Sturken 1997:44-84). I agree that there is a resemblance; however, unlike the Vietnam memorial by Maya Lin, the CWM has the "upward-inflection" and "implicit spatial optimism" that J. Winter (2010:3) suggests are characteristics of many war museums. (The Historial de la Grande Guerre in Péronne, of which Winter was a founder, is an exception in its resolutely horizontal design.)

military history from earliest times to the present, featuring the experiences of people on the battlefields and at home" (CWM n.d.b). (See Figure 13 for a floor plan of the museum.) From the foyer, visitors enter the gallery space where from a central position they can choose to enter any of the four permanent exhibits which together tell a chronological story of how war has shaped Canada: (1) "Battleground", from First Peoples' warfare through colonial times to 1885; (2) "For Crown And Country", from the South African War through the First World War; (3) "Forged in Fire", the Second World War; and concluding with (4) "A Violent Peace" from the Cold War to the present. These historical exhibits are positioned around a central axis at which the Royal Canadian Legion Hall of Honour is located; that is, the Hall of Honour is at the central point of departure and arrival for every one of the four historical exhibits. In the Hall of Honour, visitors are presented with a history of "how traditional honouring of the fallen has changed and developed over time" (Brandon 2005) from the burials of aboriginal warriors to the public treatment of Afghanistan war dead. In the centre of the Hall of Honour is the original plaster model of the National War Memorial. This is one of many design features that place Remembrance themes at the centre of the museum visitor's experience.

While visitors control how they move through the space of the museum – they control their pace, for example, and may choose to skip one historical period (i.e. historical gallery) in favour of another – the museum space is designed to ensure that all visitors will be affected in a particular way.<sup>6</sup> First, the architect and gallery designers aimed to evoke the "trauma" of war

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6 Bal (1992) observes that "the space of a museum presupposes a walking tour, an order in which the exhibits and panels are to be viewed and read" (561). However, some museums may offer more flexibility than others. The CWM is similar to the USS Arizona Memorial in Hawaii (which commemorates and narrates the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour from the American perspective) as a space that is "both open-ended and directive" (G. White 2005:250). Geoffrey White (2005) notes that visitors to the Memorial can "wander around" selectively within different parts of the museum, but visits to the Memorial are nevertheless "highly coded" by a film that visitors must watch on arrival, which conveys the "focal emotions" that visitors are expected to experience and perform (251). Similarly, visitors to the CWM can personalize their walking tour, but every tour of the CWM will pass

through interior walls at "jagged angles" made of "raw and exposed" concrete "skewing one's sense of equilibrium" (Moriyama 2006:69). Moriyama writes: "The aim is to provoke a sense of unease within visitors sufficient to release some of their physical and emotional inhibitions" (69). The feelings that are provoked by these design features are supposed to be resonant with the experiences of soldiers in war. Designer Bill Haley observes: "Little comfort or respite is offered to the visitor; the elemental, fractured structures of the exhibits are as fragmented as the story of war itself" (Haley 2005:3). It is the soldier's experience of war that is privileged, as Moriyama designed interior walls such that they would limit the field of vision according to his understanding of WWI and WWII soldiers' limited perceptual abilities during combat; Moriyama even went so far as to consider the average height of WWI and WWII Canadian soldiers (apparently it was 5'8") in his design (Moriyama 2006:82-83).

This unsettling emotional experience is the first objective in a design strategy which then aims at a second objective of "drawing the visitor into special spaces for moments of reflection and contemplation" (Haley 2005:3).<sup>7</sup> One of these spaces is the already mentioned Hall of Honour. A second space is Regeneration Hall, located inside the rising peak of the museum with a window that directs attention to the Peace Tower (Figures 14-16). Moriyama describes Regeneration Hall as "a place of rest and thought" (2006:103). While Moriyama suggests that "the thoughts and emotional responses of each person will differ" (110), the contents of Regeneration Hall direct visitors' attention to the theme of sacrifice. The Hall contains sculptures by Walter Allward, the architect of the Vimy Memorial, that are replicas of the ones that appear

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through spaces that are designed to encourage reflection according to the affective order of Remembrance.

7 In this respect, the CWM is similar to rites of passage that seek to unsettle initiands so as to more effectively (and affectively) bond them to key symbols and meanings of their new identities (see Turner 1967b). Furthermore, in light of suggestions that museum tours may be similar to pilgrimages (Duncan 1995:12; G. White 2000:509), it is worth noting that traditional Christian pilgrimages are characterised by "trials and tribulations" along the pilgrim's way, punctuated by and culminating in encounters with the sacred (Turner and Turner 1978:7-11).

on the Memorial. A sign tells the visitor: "The statues symbolize the values defended and the sacrifices made by Canadian soldiers in the First World War." Until 2010, there was a painting, Longstaff's *Ghosts of Vimy Ridge*, showing the rising of dead Canadian soldiers from the battlefield.<sup>8</sup> Especially prominent is a painting by Charles Sims, called *Sacrifice* (Figure 17), which depicts two scenes: above is a scene of tired and wounded Canadian soldiers in a devastated landscape; below is a scene of weary, bereaved and hard-working civilians. In the foreground, dividing the scenes vertically, is a cross; as viewers, we are looking at the cross from behind, and we can see enough of the body on the cross to recognize that it is Jesus. It is interesting that Sims' painting includes and represents back to us the sacrificial lens through which we are asked to look upon the war experience. The horizontal axis of the cross spells the word "sacrifice" with the shields of the provinces lined up to match the letters in the word.<sup>9</sup> As such, the painting also suggests that sacrifice in war is constitutive of the Canadian nation.

The third space of reflection is Memorial Hall (Figures 18-19). This hall is arguably the most important, first of all due to its central location in the foyer; all visitors to the museum will pass Memorial Hall at the start of their visit and again at the conclusion as they exit. The Hall is therefore a point of departure and return for the whole museum experience. Secondly, its location in the Foyer means that it is open for free to members of the public even if they do not pay to visit the museum galleries. It is, in effect, a public war memorial at the heart of the museum.

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8 Longstaff's painting is part of the House of Commons Heritage Collection. It was on loan to the CWM for five years from the museum's opening in 2005 (Parliament of Canada n.d.). *The Ghosts of Vimy Ridge* is very similar to Longstaff's *Menin Gate at Midnight (Ghosts of Menin Gate)* which was given to the Government of Australia and was viewed by more than 100 thousand Australians in a "pilgrimage of the bereaved" in 1928-29 (D. Lloyd 1998:185-7).

9 At the time of the painting (1918), there were nine provinces, equal in number to the letters in the word "sacrifice". Newfoundland and Labrador became the tenth province of Canada in 1949. Even though they contributed soldiers to the Canadian Expeditionary Force, the Yukon Territory and Northwest Territories are not identified on the painting, presumably because territories lack the constitutional status of provinces.

Memorial Hall is "an austere, 9x9 metre cube" (Moriyama 2006:74) whose walls have a "grid pattern" that is "proportioned after WWI Canadian gravestones" (Legion Magazine 2005). In contrast to the stark design elsewhere in the museum, the Hall has "an ethereal quality":

Illuminated by a skylight, the concrete of the Memorial Hall shimmers in the glow of natural light, even on the most overcast day.... Viewed from the doorway, the long bench in the chamber encourages entry. Standing before this bench, visitors will see the reflecting pool, which during the day is illuminated by natural light and at night by the gentle glow of lights at the pool's base. While sitting on the bench, visitors will notice the headstone of the Unknown Soldier embedded in the wall in front of them. This headstone and the silence of the space, insulated as it is from the hubbub of the lobby beyond, invites quiet contemplation and reflection (Legion Magazine 2005).

The focus of attention in the hall is this gravestone of the Unknown Soldier (Figure 19) whose remains were taken from France to be entombed in front of the National War Memorial in Ottawa in 2000. As an unknown, this soldier "represents all Canadians, whether they be navy, army, air force or merchant marine, who died or may die for their country in all conflicts – past, present, and future" (VAC n.d.a). In the Memorial Hall, the window has been designed precisely so that at 11am on Remembrance Day (November 11) a ray of sunlight will shine directly on this gravestone which represents past and future sacrifice.<sup>10</sup> Moriyama writes: "the Hall of Remembrance [Memorial Hall] honours the memories of veterans and the heroic lives sacrificed for Canada and for the ideals of peace and democracy" (2006:79). In addition to the hall's

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<sup>10</sup> Kratz (2011) provides an extensive discussion of the use of light in museum design as a means of focalizing attention and emotion. The use of natural sunlight in the CWM's Memorial Hall is a powerful symbol of renewal and redemption, directed at the symbol of the soldier's sacrifice. Another natural element in the Memorial Hall is the water in the reflecting pool. Water has a calming effect on the senses and has cleansing and purifying associations. (Incidentally, the same use of sunlight is featured in the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne, Australia, constructed in 1934, which is designed so that the sun's rays will precisely illuminate a Stone of Remembrance at 11am on November 11. See Taylor 2005.)

alignment with the sun's position on Remembrance Day, the hall is also aligned on an axis that symbolically connects it with the Peace Tower (although the Tower is not visible); as such, in both Regeneration and Memorial Halls, the theme of sacrifice is connected with the ideal of peace.

As already noted, the designers intended for visitors to have an emotional experience of the effects (or affects) of war from a soldier's perspective. From this "unease" (Moriyama 2006:69) the visitor is offered more comforting spaces that encourage "reflection" (Moriyama 2006:79). Although Moriyama suggests that visitors may have different thoughts and feelings, these spaces of reflecting on the experience of war are nevertheless dominated by the theme of sacrifice. The point of departure and return for the entire museum visit is the Memorial Hall in which visitors' attention is directed to a symbolic representation of all dead Canadian soldiers. Visitors may choose their own narrative path through the historical exhibitions, where they may learn a variety of details about various conflicts, but whatever they learn about war, they are encouraged to reflect on the death of soldiers – not killing – as the central issue of war, the issue about which they are most encouraged to feel.<sup>11</sup>

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11 The sacrificial framing of war was repeated in the museum's special exhibition, *Afghanistan: A Glimpse of War*, on display from February 2007 to April 2008. The exhibition focused on "the origins of the war in Afghanistan, and Canadian participation from the first deployment in 2002 to current [2007] operations in Kandahar province" (Burtch 2007:43; see also Innes 2008). From an opening recollection of the events of 9/11, visitors to the special exhibition then "join[ed] Canadian soldiers in the field" (Burtch 2007:45) through photographs, videos and texts about patrols, reconstruction efforts, and counterinsurgency actions. While the curator notes that the exhibit "had to reflect the heavy fighting between Canadian soldiers and a resurgent Taliban" (48), the major artefacts in the exhibit were intended to "portray the threats posed to Canadian soldiers by Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and suicide bombings, which have caused the most casualties to date" (48-49). Notice that in the curator's statement, attention moves from "heavy fighting" between Canadians and their enemies, to a concern with "threats posed to Canadian soldiers", while the threats that Canadians pose to their enemies are unmentioned and then clearly forgotten by the time the statement arrives at "the most casualties to date" which clearly does not include Taliban casualties. The exhibition concluded with "a visual montage of all the Canadian soldiers killed to date in Afghanistan" (50). In this final space, visitors were invited to reflect and "share their opinions about what they believe are the consequences of having gone to Afghanistan, of staying there, or possibly withdrawing from the country completely" (50). As with the permanent exhibitions in the museum, the space for reflection in the special exhibit on Afghanistan focused attention on Canadian soldiers' deaths as the central issue of the war. If visitors responded to the influence of the exhibition's design, then their thoughts on the war – for or against –

## War Museum (2): The Ghostly Presence

The museum galleries include many displays of the weapons of war that accompany the narrative from colonial times to the present. In some displays, the visitor is able to handle a weapon, such as the grenades used in the Ortona battle. The display on the Canadair Sabre fighter jet offers visitors the tactile experience of making coloured rubbings of the aircraft. The experience of weaponry culminates in the LeBreton Gallery (Figure 20). This gallery is in a large lower-level chamber that visitors descend to from Regeneration Hall – a rather unusual passage from the hall's themes of sacrifice and peace into a space filled with large machinery of tanks, artillery guns, and aircraft. There is also a lookout onto the LeBreton Gallery from the WWII exhibit space. One might think that the display of such large weaponry would prompt visitors to think or feel something about the killing action that was, after all, how Canadians "fought for peace" in past wars. Considering the museum's mandate to convey "the human experience of war" and how "Canadians have affected and been affected" by war (CWM n.d.c), one might expect some attention, if not to the enemy's experience of being confronted with such weaponry, then at least to how Canadians were affected by using such weapons against their enemies. Instead, such thoughts – to whatever extent visitors have them – are unsupported in the museum and are likely to be experienced as unwelcome, dissonant feelings. In her review of the museum, Katarzyna Rukszto (2008) describes precisely this experience of dissonance. Rukszto describes descending from the "eerie" space of Regeneration Hall into the LeBreton Gallery where she immediately was struck with "fear" as she found herself facing the gun of a tank. Instead of imagining herself

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hinged on the meaning of Canadian deaths; visitors were not invited to reflect on the merits or problematic issues of Canadian acts of killing. Certainly, some visitors may have reflected on killing, but any such thoughts and feelings went against the grain of the exhibit's design. Few Canadians find this framing of attention problematic. As a reviewer of the Afghanistan exhibition wrote in the *Ottawa Citizen*: "The exhibition is definitely pro-soldier. You instantly bond with the Canadian troops whose lives and deaths are pictured in this show.... However, *A Glimpse of War* is not propaganda. It's not even political" (Gessell 2007).

as the Canadian inside the tank, Rukszto experienced herself (as she actually was) outside it, in its line of fire. She writes: "Facing the tangible proof of Canadian involvement in killing, I sense ghostly presence" (746). The ghostly presence felt by Rukszto was "the absence of those on the outside of the tank" (748).<sup>12</sup> Later in her tour of the museum, Rukszto met a veteran-guide.

I tell him that I am struck by the disjuncture of moving from Regeneration Hall to a room full of tanks – not much hope here. I tell him that it makes me think of those who encountered these weapons, what happens in such encounters. He says that I need to think about the fact that some people got into these machines because they had a job to do – how did they do it? He tells me that they were all marvellous people; they did it and do it for us. I feel chastised for missing the point, for being concerned with the wrong people's sacrifice (751-752).

The manner in which visitors are encouraged to reflect on weapons displayed elsewhere in the museum is suggested, indirectly, by the Canadian War Museum tour guide and training coordinator's description of a Ross rifle that is displayed in the World War One gallery. Training coordinator Ashlee Beattie writes: "It [the Ross rifle] encourages the visitor to think about the size of the men who fought in the war, the type of wounds the soldiers might suffer from or the lack of understanding of the officers in charge" (2011:14). Notice that Beattie considers the wounding (or killing) effects of the rifle, but imagines those effects on the bodies of Canadian soldiers, even though this was a Canadian rifle that Canadians used to wound and kill Germans. The training coordinator's thoughts on the Canadian weapon remain within the sacrificial frame of Remembrance that insists on foregrounding the Canadian soldier as a victim, not as a perpetrator, of violence. The impact of Canadian soldiers' actions on enemy soldiers' bodies

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<sup>12</sup> Rukszto draws on Avery Gordon's concept of haunting as "an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known" (A. Gordon 2008:xvi).

remains resolutely outside the field of attention and feeling.<sup>13</sup>

There is one instance in the museum where the visitor is confronted with the results of Canadian acts of violence. This is the display "The Bombing Campaign" in the WWII gallery. The text of the display describes the Allied bombing campaign against German cities, noting that 600,000 Germans were killed and 5 million made homeless. The text concludes that "the effectiveness and the morality of bombing heavily-populated areas in war continue to be debated." The text is accompanied by a photograph of dead German civilians strewn half-naked across a pavement, with the caption, "Civilian Casualties: Images like this one fueled the post-war debate about the bomber offensive." Two more photos depict "collateral damage" to buildings (with no bodies visible). This display was modified in 2007 following complaints by the Legion and the Canadian Air Force Association (Dean 2009). Prior to its modification, the display focused exclusively on the German civilian casualties and included statements in favour of the bombing campaign by Sir Arthur "Bomber" Harris and John Kenneth Galbraith, followed by a statement by a Canadian airman, Flight Lieutenant W.E. Vaughan. The airman's statement revealed that he had thought about the unseen victims of his bombs: "more than once I wondered 'how many people will these bombs kill?' However, you couldn't dwell on it. That's the way war is" (Dean 2009:4). The Legion and Air Force Association argued that the original display was unbalanced, and in response to the veterans' complaints, a Senate committee in May 2007 asked the museum to redesign the display to remove the "sense of insult" that was felt by veterans (Dean 2009:5). Accordingly, the museum redrafted the text so that it introduces the bombing campaign as "an important part of the Allied effort that achieved victory", emphasizes the

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13 J. Winter proposes that "for every weapon on display" in a war museum, there should be "an image or an object pointing to the injury or mayhem that weapon causes to the human body" (2012:162).

campaign's achievements, praises the air crews' "great courage against heavy odds" and mentions the Canadian losses (10,000 dead) before concluding with the numbers of German dead. The statements by Harris, Galbraith and Vaughan were removed. In effect, the German deaths became a detail in a larger (and more familiar) story of Canadian sacrifice and achievement, and the display no longer included a Canadian veteran's uneasy feeling about killing.

Even as it has been contextualized to reduce its potential disturbance, the Bombing Campaign display nevertheless represents a small space in the museum where the visitor is invited to contemplate the issue of killing. However, this is an issue of "exceptional" wartime violence (that is, an exception to the rule): the killing of civilians, which is a possible war crime. This is typical of debates about war in the contemporary West which tend to focus on the "moral margins" of warfare while regarding violence between soldiers as a non-issue, thus "leaving the war paradigm itself unquestioned" (Lutz and Millar 2012:482). The possibility that killing soldiers in uniform might be "immoral or amoral in and of itself" is almost never raised (Lutz and Millar 2012:486). The visitor to the museum is never invited to ponder the "normal" violence of war, nor is there any direct evidence in the museum that soldiers might be affected by the "norm".

There are other possible hints of the soldier's troubled affects. In the display on the D-Day landings, there is a text panel with the words of Sergeant Major Charles Martin: "After we had charged the beach and I knew what war was, I couldn't help going behind a wall and crying." However, Martin's words might refer exclusively to his experience of the deaths of his fellow Canadians; there is nothing in the words that compels the visitor to relate them to killing. Then, in a panel on the war in Korea, there is a prominent statement by Lieutenant Colonel Jim Stone: "Be steady! Kill, and don't give way." The context is not given, but the visitor might discern that this

was a command to Stone's troops.<sup>14</sup> Here, there is no indication of troubled affect on Stone's part. Nevertheless, a discerning visitor might sense that the utterance of the command suggests the need to be commanded, that it did not come easily to the soldiers, even with their training, to be steady and kill.

### **War Museum (3): The Ortona Diorama**

The most emotional words about soldiers' acts of killing that one finds in the museum are in the Ortona walk-through diorama. This is one of a small number of battlefield immersion experiences in the museum, and it is the closest encounter that a visitor has with an enemy soldier.<sup>15</sup> At the entrance to the diorama (Figure 21), a text panel introduces the Battle of Ortona: "For over a week, they [Canadian forces] fought a vicious house-to-house struggle through booby-trapped buildings and narrow, rubble-blocked streets against elite German paratroops." We see a photograph of a dead Canadian soldier and a street of ruined houses. An arrow on the floor takes us through an archway and into the Ortona diorama.

Inside, we are in a space with a ruined ceiling, bullet-marked walls, broken furniture, wood and plaster. There are sounds of sporadic machine gun fire; footsteps and nervous breathing; falling rubble, creaking floor boards, the creaking of a distant tank; distant shouts of men; a bomb

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14 Stone spoke these words to the Canadian troops whom he commanded on Hill 677 in the Battle of Kap'yong on April 24, 1951 (see Bercuson 1999:83-111). Prior to the Korean War, in WWII, Stone was a Major in the Loyal Edmonton Regiment during the Battle of Ortona. Some of his accounts of Ortona will be discussed later in this dissertation.

15 A diorama is "a three dimensional, life-size simulated environment in which models or taxidermied animals are placed in order to depict a scene or an event" (Mortensen 2010:324). In a walk-through diorama, the visitor is brought inside the display space and becomes somewhat of a participant rather than merely a spectator; in this respect, a walk-through is a type of museum "immersion experience" (Mortensen 2010:324). In addition to the Ortona walk-through diorama, the other battlefield immersions at the museum are a walk-through of a WWI trench and a video display of the D-Day landing which the visitor watches from inside a mock landing craft.

blast, rapid running steps, rapid breathing; and more machine gun bursts. In the direction we must go, a Canadian soldier is standing with his back to us – it must be his breathing that we hear, close enough to be our own (Figure 22). He is standing tensely with his rifle against a wall, either waiting or preparing to go around the corner. In the diorama, he is frozen in a moment in time, but we can walk forward and see what is coming. When we turn the corner, we come suddenly face to face with a large German soldier holding a submachine gun (Figure 23).

Beyond the German, at the exit of the diorama (Figure 24), a text panel quotes the CBC war correspondent Matthew Halton who reported from Ortona during and after the battle:

The Germans were demons: the Canadians were possessed by demons. The more murderous the battle, the harder both sides fought, from window to window, from door to door, in a carnival of fury.

If the visitor chooses to press the button below a simulated 1940s-era radio attached to the wall, they will hear an original broadcast by Halton in which he describes the road to Ortona. Halton concludes:

This was not a big battle, but it was one of the biggest ever fought by Canadians. The attacking Canadians beat two of the finest German divisions that ever marched, killing them man by man in a long drawn out [... inaudible – the radio crackles]. The battle had a frightful tempo, and on Christmas [... radio fades].

Halton's words dwell on the Canadian killing action against the Germans "man by man". The text panels before and after the walk-through diorama stress the power of the German enemy that had to be matched by the Canadians. Notice that in Halton's text, the Canadians were merely

possessed by demons, while the Germans **were** demons. If we take a closer look at the figures in the diorama, however, we are given a different impression of the soldiers' characters. There is a remarkable contrast in posture and affect. The Canadian soldier looks to be in an extreme state of alertness and terror; his eyes are wide open, eyebrows raised, and his lips are tense and downturned (Figure 25). By contrast, the German appears calm and confident but with a weary look in his eyes, as if this is a familiar task for him and he is resigned to it (Figure 26). The German hardly looks like a demon, while the Canadian looks possessed more by fear than by demons.

This walk-through experience might prompt a visitor to wonder what it was like to have to turn the corner and kill the heavy-eyed German with the large, unevenly-laced boots (Figure 27).<sup>16</sup> That wonder might only happen though if one takes a second look. The primary affects that the diorama promotes are shock and fear, as the diorama is designed so that we experience the German first as a sudden threat; we turn the corner, he surprises us, and we realise that he has been waiting for us and has probably killed us.<sup>17</sup>

The Ortona walk-through diorama certainly has strong potential to fulfil the museum's ambition to provoke unease in the visitor. The unease is not only in the fearful sounds, sights, and shock of encountering the German; it is also in the disjuncture between the vulnerable body language of the soldiers and the hard, forceful language of the text panels. The Ortona display is

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16 I find it interesting that the German's boots are unevenly laced. It draws attention and humanizes the soldier as an individual with a story. (One might wonder why a professional, experienced soldier would lace his boots that way.) This design feature seems unlikely to be happenstance, and it would be interesting to know what if anything it meant to the designers. (The Canadian's boots are evenly laced.)

17 It would be valuable to conduct a survey of visitors' experiences of the diorama. While I was observing the diorama, I watched two pre-teen boys turn the corner. The boys were startled and shouted in surprise when they encountered the German. Then they laughed at each other's reaction. When they noticed me with my notebook, they asked me where they could find Hitler's car. (The CWM has a black Mercedes that was used by Hitler. Its popularity, especially with young people, has been an occasional source of concern. For an analysis that seeks to understand rather than condemn young people's fascination with this car, see Matthews 2009.)

the closest confrontation with the soldier's act of killing in the museum. We might imagine it as a German act, or as a Canadian act. In any case, having taken us on this brief passage through the killing action, the arrows on the floor lead us onward through the narrative of the Second World War to victory. When we exit the WWII gallery, we will find ourselves in spaces of reflection that focus our attention on the familiar theme of sacrifice, in the Hall of Honour with the replica National War Memorial, in Regeneration Hall with Sims' painting *Sacrifice*, and in Memorial Hall with the headstone of the Unknown Canadian Soldier.

### **Narrating Ortona as a Work of Remembrance**

The Canadian War Museum is an authoritative model of how to tell war stories that conduct us through the space of killing while maintaining the affective order of Remembrance. The soldier's act of killing is not denied in the museum; in places, it is explicitly mentioned; but the experience is unexamined and treated as unproblematic. By contrast, spaces of reflection are constructed at points along the visitor's way, and notably at the beginning and end of the journey. These reflection spaces make death the central issue of war by inviting the visitor to dwell on the meaning of Canadian sacrifice. As such, the museum is designed according to the sacrificial frame, and it serves to promote that frame implicitly. We can find another instance of this framing of the war story in a best-selling history book of the Battle of Ortona.

*Ortona: Canada's Epic WWII Battle* (1999) is the first in a series of military history books on Canadian WWII battles by popular historian Mark Zuehlke. The book received strongly favourable reviews in Canadian newspapers (e.g. Lowman 1999; Haskin 2000) and in the *Canadian Military Journal* where it was praised particularly for its realism: "The strength of this

book is the understanding it conveys of the brutal realities of combat in the Italian theatre" (Cessford 2000:80). The success of the book prompted Zuehlke to research and publish more works in what has become an acclaimed "Canadian Battle Series". Zuehlke has been shortlisted twice for the Governor General's Pierre Berton History Award for Popular Media, and he has been praised by Jack Granatstein as Canada's "leading popular military historian" (Douglas & McIntyre 2014).

Zuehlke's book is a narrative that follows the affective order of Remembrance. Indeed, it is self-consciously history-writing in the service of Remembrance. In his introduction, Zuehlke (1999) describes the book as a "work of remembrance":

This is a work of remembrance. I hope it also contributes to our collective understanding of both the experience of battle and its inevitable human costs (xv).

Just as the veteran is a key symbol of Canadian war remembrance, Zuehlke's "work of remembrance" claims to privilege the memories of veterans: "collective veteran memory became the essence of this book" (ix). As such, Zuehlke suggests an alignment or even equivalence between his narrative composition and the combat experiences of veterans. Given that he aims to describe the reality of battle and evaluate the strategic decisions by commanders, he must address the reliability of such memory. First, he suggests that war memories are less distorted by time than other memories, because war memories are so intense:

War, as the esteemed psychologist Abraham Maslow contended, is a peak experience.... a heightening of sensation that transcends the normal flow of life. The experience is so intense that it will never be forgotten. It is not surprising

then that the veterans still carry these memories and that some are unable to discuss them at all because they remain so alive to them (x).

His examples of that intensity focus exclusively on Canadian veterans' experiences of the deaths of their comrades:

The distant gaze in Bert Hoffmeister's eyes, as he described the caked blood on the hands and faces of the wounded in the San Vito hospital, is mute evidence of how vivid such memories remain. When a bullet meant for Jock Gibson only clipped his ear, but struck the young runner behind him in the face, the image of the boy's dead body lying on a cobblestone street in San Leonardo stuck. Those are the type of memories reflected in this book (x).

Furthermore, veterans' experiences of death are given as a reason for privileging their accounts of other events of the battle:

Based mainly on the analysis of veterans, I have tried to capture and reflect the many errors of strategy and tactics that occurred. These men had to bury comrades as a result. So I gave them the last word (xi).

Zuehlke's book therefore activates the sacrificial frame whereby the soldier's experience of death is the most significant issue of war. Consistent with that sacrificial frame, the book's subsequent combat narrative describes the Canadians' actions of perpetrating violence as if these actions were either agentless or as if the agents were emotionally uninvolved in their actions. Even when the violent action is described vividly, it is never associated with personal expression or memory. The jacket of the book tells us:

In one blood-soaked, furious week of fighting, from December 20 to December 27, 1943, the 1st Canadian Infantry Division took the town of Ortona, Italy, from elite German paratroopers ordered to hold the medieval port town at all costs. Infantrymen serving in the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and the Seaforth Highlanders, supported by tankers of the Three Rivers Regiment, moved from house to house in hand-to-hand combat amid heavy shelling and wrested the town from the grip of the fierce German defenders.

We are told of "hand-to-hand combat" that is "blood-soaked". Fury is invoked, but as a descriptor of an impersonal noun – the week. The language in the text attributes intense acts of physical aggression to collective agents such as "the Canadians" or "the Edmontons", as we read of how they "slogged", "cleared", "breached," "jumped", "raked", and "bludgeoned".<sup>18</sup>

The Edmontons, meanwhile, slogged their way through Piazza Municipale and started a crawling advance up Corso Umberto I (278).... The process of clearing floors was dangerous and bloody business. When a hole had been breached in the wall, the first section hurled a few grenades through. After these exploded, one or two men would jump into the smoke- and dust-filled room and rake it with Thompson submachine-gun fire. If there were any paratroopers in the room, they usually died before they could react (285-86).... In this manner, the Canadians slowly bludgeoned their way through the streets of Ortona (287).... The air was choked with smoke and dust. Fires burned in the wreckage of buildings. Hour after remorseless hour witnessed the constant din of explosions, machine guns rattling, rifles cracking, and masonry collapsing (287).

When it comes to specific acts of killing, however, the events are narrated in a plain language that is remarkably devoid of such emotive descriptors. The text tells us that Germans were killed as if there is nothing more to know or say.

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18 As Scarry (1985) observes, military formations are sometimes described as "a single embodied combatant, with the real human body's elemental duality of being at once capable of inflicting injury and receiving it" (70). Scarry adds that this style of description relocates injury "to a place (the imaginary body of a colossus) where it is no longer recognizable or interpretable" (71).

Dougan saw a wounded [German] sergeant lying in clear view on the cobblestones. He shouted at the man to surrender. Slowly, calmly, the German raised his rifle and fired at Dougan. Dougan's men cut him down (255).

Sometimes the killing agents are not the Canadians, but their guns.

Rifles, Bren guns, and Thompson submachine guns poked out of the windows and opened fire as one. The Germans died in place (254).<sup>19</sup>

The violent confrontation with the enemy is narrated with this tone of grim, forceful determination accompanied by emotional detachment. Recall that the text is presented to the reader as a work of remembrance that has been shaped by the memories of veterans. By implication, this presumably is the nature of veterans' experience: moved by the deaths of comrades, yet unaffected by the act of killing Germans. The book concludes with a description of the author's visit to the Canadian war cemetery outside Ortona (see Figure 8). At this point, when the action of the battle is complete, the reader is returned to the domain of feeling and memory. Just as in the Canadian War Museum, we conclude our passage through the experience of war with a moment of reflection in which our attention is directed to the graves of Canadian soldiers. It is among these graves of Canadians that we are invited to contemplate "the costs of war".

December 1998. I stand before the tombstones of the Moro River Canadian Cemetery. It is one of those crisp, clear, early winter days... Canadian Forces Major Michael Boire and I have come to this cemetery, as must all pilgrims

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<sup>19</sup> Consider Scarry's (1985) observation that weapons, made from the "unequivocal nonsentience of steel, wood, iron, and aluminum", are incapable of experiencing the potentially "traumatic occurrence" of killing (66).

drawn to Abruzzo province by the Battle of Ortona. Michael walks slowly from one tombstone to another. A name read, date of death noted, regiment identified, a moment of silent remembrance passed.... We have spent several days going methodically over the December battlefield. Michael has offered me his soldier's eye and understanding of how ground affects a military operation. Today we measure the costs (373-74).

The book is indeed a "work of remembrance", then, as it reproduces the affective order of Remembrance wherein death is the issue of war and killing has no significance.

### **The German at the Door**

This order of affect is not, however, an unmediated expression of veterans' memories. Although Zuehlke suggests that "collective veteran memory became the essence of this book" (ix), the book's narrative is actually the outcome of a particular approach to writing and research that limited the types of memories that could be collected, and that conditioned their representation.

First, let us consider Zuehlke's approach to composition. In his text, veterans' stories are told, but the veterans rarely speak for themselves; their accounts are usually paraphrased, and when they are quoted, their words are edited to make them more coherent as well as more consonant with Remembrance. For example, Zuehlke tells this story (part of which was already quoted above):

Dougan opened the door to the pensione and the men quickly secured the house. Stone led Dougan and several infantrymen up the stairs to the top storey. They found the rooms there empty. From the upstairs windows, they looked right down into the German slit trenches. Rifles, Bren guns, and Thompson submachine guns poked out of the windows and opened fire as one. The Germans died in place (254).

His source for this passage is an oral history interview with Jim Stone that is archived at the University of Victoria. Here is the relevant passage from the original recorded narrative:

I said to Dougan we'll put down a couple of smoke bombs from our two inch mortar and we'll run across this open ground. Which we did. And most successfully, it was quite surprise to all the Germans, and they were dug in just in front of us, and which we hadn't seen, but who had raised Cain with us. And then we had fun shooting them, like they were a bunch of deer when they started to move away. And uh, we got into a, a large house just on the outskirts of Ortona which I think at one time had been a f, form of a pension, a small hotel of some kind or another.<sup>20</sup>

Notice that the sequence of events is out of order in Stone's original words. In Zuehlke's narrative, Stone's speech has been paraphrased in order to make the story more coherent in terms of the time and place. However, Zuehlke does more than put the story into chronological order; he also puts it into affective order by removing the statement of "fun shooting them, like they were a bunch of deer". The motivation for this edit is probably that Stone's feeling of fun disturbs the affective order whereby Canadian veterans (as well as Canadian readers of war narratives) are supposed to be detached from the experience of killing. Granted, it could be argued that Zuehlke intended to edit, not the feeling, but the "unrealistic" reference to Germans as deer. However, there are other passages in which Zuehlke quotes veterans' fanciful or metaphorical observations, including animal imagery, such as the following description by John Dougan:

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<sup>20</sup> Stone, James Riley: *My Army Recollections* (Reel 1, Side 2). Interview by William Thackray, May 13, 20, and June 3, 10 and 17, 1980. University of Victoria Canadian Military Oral History Collection, Reginald H. Roy Collection. I have transcribed the recorded narratives by Jim Stone and John Dougan according to the same transcription method (described in Chapter 1) that I used with my own fieldwork interviews.

Precisely at noon [on December 20], the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and the Seaforth Highlanders of Canada kicked off a joint attack toward Ortona.... The Germans put up little resistance. Dougan's troops advanced through a system of zigzag trenches. They crossed one line of trenches after another. He caught only brief glimpses of the defending paratroopers through the smoke and explosions of the Canadians' creeping barrage. 'They'd pop up like bloody jackrabbits,' he said later, 'and you would have had to have a shotgun to get them before they scampered off down the trench. We pressed right on' (241-42).

Dougan's statement is just as unrealistic as Stone's; one says the Germans were like jackrabbits, the other says they were like deer. The difference is that Dougan's feeling about his animal-German targets is restrained. He speaks in an unaffected manner, as if he had no time to feel anything, he just "pressed right on". Actually, in Zuehlke's narrative, Dougan's words have been edited in a way that gives him a tough, determined tone. The source for Dougan's story is the same oral history archive that was mentioned above as the source of Stone's story. In the original recording, Dougan's speech is more hesitant and laboured:

Uh, I did see some but uh, they had a system of sort of zig zag trenches and uh, and uh, they'd pop out of there like bloody jack rabbits and you know you had to be, you had to had to have a shot gun to uh, to get em I guess. But uh, not many and we, we, we pressed right on.<sup>21</sup>

Zuehlke removed the hesitations ("uh", "we, we, we"), repairs ("you had to be, you had to had to have") and hedges ("I guess"), making Dougan's speech appear stronger, more composed. The latter kind of transcription is fairly common; speech is rarely as orderly as writing, and many authors consider it a courtesy to the speaker when they edit the original speech into a more

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21 Dougan, John: My Army Recollections (Reel 1, Side 1). Interview by Tim Torrie. July 27, 1987. University of Victoria Canadian Military Oral History Collection, Reginald H. Roy Collection.

coherent text. In this way, the speaker is made to appear more rational and authoritative (Slembrouck 1992; Bucholtz 2000).<sup>22</sup> This can be particularly important if the speaker is being used as an authoritative source for a factual argument or account of "what really happened". In traditional historiography, written documents have more authority than speech (Thompson 1988:50-52). In editing veterans' speech to make it appear more composed, Zuehlke was making it conform to the traditional standards of history writing.

In addition to these oral history records produced by other researchers, Zuehlke also solicited narratives from other veterans whose stories had not yet been collected or archived. Here, he went beyond the officer class to ask for stories from men who had been in the lower ranks. However, these stories were collected by correspondence. Thus, these men shared their stories by composing them in writing. When individuals share thoughts in writing, they have more opportunity to edit their words not only for coherence but also for consistency with social expectations. People can edit their speech as well, but their efforts to do so in speech are more likely to be apparent (at least to careful observers) in false starts, repairs, and contrasting "keys of affect" (Besnier 1990:430; Ong 1982:104; Goody 2000:149).<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, when individuals share experiences in writing for an unknown audience, they are more likely to be cautious in what they reveal than if they tell stories in the presence of another person with whom they have

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22 Many characteristics of speech, such as filler words and repairs, as well as deviations from Standard English, are frequently removed in the textualizing process known as "clean verbatim transcription" in order to make spoken discourse conform to standard written English (for an illustration, see Finnegan 1992:197). This approach to transcription is common in news media, academia, politics and law (Slembrouck 1992; Bucholtz 2000) and reflects the "dominance of the written paradigm" as a form of power and prestige (Slembrouck 1992:108). Accordingly, "those who represent spoken discourse according to written norms often consider themselves to be doing the original speaker a favor by 'cleaning up' her or his speech" (Bucholtz 2000:1452). Even when authors do not want to edit speech in this way, publishers may require it (Rimmon-Kenan 2002:22).

23 Ong (1982) notes: "With writing, words once 'uttered', outered, put down on the surface, can be eliminated, erased, changed. There is no equivalent for this in an oral performance, no way to erase a spoken word: corrections do not remove an infelicity or an error, they merely supplement it with denial and patchwork" (104).

established some trust and rapport.

The socially distant and controlled approach adopted by Zuehlke will tend to elicit personal narratives that conform to social conventions, and the method will often fail to discover experiences that are defensively protected, hidden or repressed. When individuals have thoughts and feelings that transgress social conventions, they tend to keep them private. Furthermore, experiences that do not fit within available interpretive frames are harder to organize or make coherent even to ourselves (Kirmayer 1996; Neimeyer 2004). They are therefore harder to express directly, at least at the outset, even when we are willing to share them. A research method that is aligned with social conventions and that offers no support for disordered forms of expression is going to pass over these subjugated experiences and may conclude they are nonexistent when really they existed but were simply inaccessible to the method.

My approach, by contrast, was a person-centred interviewing method drawn from psychological anthropology and other life story research methods. As I explained in Chapter 1, the essence of this approach is its focus on what is meaningful or important to the interview subject or respondent. My interviews were framed more as conversations and conducted in the more personal setting of veterans' homes. My questions were open-ended and I followed veterans' leads rather than redirect what could have been construed (according to a predetermined agenda) as digressions. I followed this interview approach with an analysis that is attuned to the meanings that are implicit in topic shifts, syntax and paralinguistic expressions.

The difference between the two methods can be illustrated by examining how one story that is told in Zuehlke's text has other meanings to the storyteller, meanings that are dissonant to Remembrance and that were expressed indirectly in conversation with me. The storyteller is Mel McPhee, who was a private in the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in the Ortona battle. I interviewed

Mel on two occasions.<sup>24</sup> At one point, he mentioned to me that through his regimental association he had received a request to share stories with Zuehlke when the author was researching his Ortona book. Mel had written up and sent his story of what he called "the German at the door". The fact that Mel had selected this experience to share suggests its importance to him. What, however, did the story mean to him? Here is the form that it takes in Zuehlke's text. The story begins with Mel struggling not to fall asleep while doing night guard duty in a doorway:

McPhee was startled out of his reverie by the sound of movement in some rubble about fifteen feet away. As far as he knew, the rubble was on the German side of the line. He cocked his Thompson machine gun and waited. A few seconds passed and then a German officer was suddenly framed directly in the doorway. He was looking straight toward McPhee. The young private pointed the gun at the officer's stomach and squeezed the trigger. He was sickened to hear only a loud click. McPhee waited for the German to gun him down. Instead the man disappeared. McPhee ran back into the room and grabbed a rifle. Then he returned to his position. Glancing out into the street, he saw no sign of the German. McPhee let the enemy officer go about his business and returned to guarding the doorway. He was not going to get himself killed trying to track the German through the streets of Ortona (333-34).

In this telling, Mel's story is a vivid, exciting, small "piece of the action" in the larger battle. It serves to illustrate "what the battle was like", but we get no sense of what it means for Mel, what it is like for him to tell it.<sup>25</sup> One might expect that, for Mel, the experience is memorable because

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24 I also met Mel and many other of my research participants informally at veterans' events including dinners and a funeral at the Legion Hall.

25 Mel told me that Zuehlke had changed the story to say that the German was "looking straight toward" him, which Mel said was not the case. I did not see what Mel wrote to Zuehlke, but I do note that in the story that Mel told me (quoted below) the German was not facing Mel. At the time of the interview, I was not sure why it mattered to Mel that this detail was different in the book (apart from the fact that many people do not like having their stories mis-told even in small details). Now I think I understand the deeper importance. In the story that Mel told me, he pulled the trigger in an attempt to kill a man who was passing him by, not approaching him – that is, a man who had no chance (if Mel's gun had worked). Zuehlke's version, which Mel said was an alteration, makes the German appear more threatening and may have the effect of making Mel's attempt to kill him appear more justified. In his study of Italian partisans' stories about killing, Portelli (1997b:134-7) observes a similar narrative strategy in the repeated descriptions of the enemy drawing his weapon first. It is noteworthy that Mel rejected the version of his

he nearly died. Another meaning, however, was implicit in Mel's telling of the story in conversation with me. At one point in our meeting, I had asked Mel about the idea of heroism, and he told me about one Canadian soldier:

He just grabbed a PIAT gun<sup>26</sup> and knocked out both tanks and then I don't know how many Germans he killed but as they piled out of the tanks, and there was Germans along with the, with the tanks too. How he got away with it I don't know, but he knocked out the two tanks and I think there was twenty some Germans that he killed at the same time. I can understand him being a drunkard, which is pretty much what he is. Oh, he drinks constantly. From the time he gets up in the morning, and I can understand that.

As Mel recounted the man's heroic actions which involved killing "twenty some Germans", he suggested a link between killing and suffering. When I prompted Mel to elaborate, he suggested that the wound was caused by hatred, and this thought reminded Mel of his own Ortona story.

Here is the progression of the narrative in Mel's (and my) own words:

I can understand him being a drunkard, which is pretty much what he is. Oh, he drinks constantly. From the time he gets up in the morning, and I can understand that.

**You think because of, something to do with that experience?**

I think so. There's a certain amount of hatred that you harbour while, while you're there on the line, you know. I can remember once in Ortona, when I was standing guard. And uh, I was in a, there was just a bit of an alcove there, but it was leading out to, to a street, maybe 15 feet away. I was standing there with a Tommy gun.<sup>27</sup> And I could, this was in the early part of the morning and I could hear this, somebody coming from the German side. And I just had the nose of the Tommy gun on, on this thing, and I could see this, to me it looked like an

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story that has the potential to portray him (in the eyes of some readers) in a better light.

26 The PIAT was an anti-tank gun used by British and Commonwealth forces in WWII.

27 "Tommy gun" is a nickname for the Thompson submachine gun that was widely used by Allied troops in WWII.

officer. But as soon as he come into view and there's only, you know, so much that you can see there, in the early morning light. I pulled the trigger, and nothing happened. And had he looked, had he looked toward me, I was dead. But, he didn't. He looked straight ahead and went that, and went by me, you know. So jeez I got out of there, and I went back, and I got a rifle. Cause the Tommy gun was jammed, and I got a rifle, and I went back to position but, he never showed up again. So, I didn't go after him.

**No? Were you, were you thinking that he might come back?**

Well I thought uh, maybe he's just uh, just seeing what the hell is out there. So, but he went, why, why he didn't look in I'm, I, to this day I've never known this.

What Mel says explicitly, as "the point" of the story – if we take the story in isolation – is that he nearly died and it is amazing that he didn't. "Had he looked, had he looked toward me, I was dead." But there is another, implicit point that is told through the series of topic shifts or chain of associations (Hollway and Jefferson 2008) from the hero's act of killing to the hero's alcoholic self-abuse to the feeling of hatred to Mel's pulling the trigger of his Tommy gun as the German officer came into view. What is told implicitly is that Mel remembers a feeling of hatred as he pulled the trigger expecting to kill, and if his gun had worked, he might have become a suffering alcoholic like the "hero". The explicit point of the story is that Mel nearly died. The implicit point is that Mel nearly killed. It seems that in Mel's reckoning, he was fortunate to escape both outcomes.<sup>28</sup>

On another occasion, Mel was explicit in making a critical point about killing. This was the moment which I described in the introduction, when Mel began to question the value of remembering while he was trying to answer my question about mouse-holing. This moment

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<sup>28</sup> Mel's implicit theory that killing leads to self-punishing behaviour among veterans was also shared by an American sniper and Iraq War veteran who was interviewed by Gutmann and Lutz (2010:145). See note in Chapter 3.

raises another point about method. Here is that moment again:

**What was it that you'd do, when you were on, would you be led up the street somewhere, or**

Yeah, yeah, you'd go up the street and uh, go into the next house, you know, and uh throw a hand grenade first and go in with your gun and, you know. So... Yeah, these, these, these are things that I, that I say I was trying to erase from, and I did a fairly good job I guess but uh, but things that you try and erase from your memory because how much good does it do you to recall it. I, I don't think, I don't think any veteran wants, wants the schoolkids today to, to glamourise war or anything. It's a terrible thing. Nobody should have to go through it. What, what, what, what fun is there, what, what is there to killing each other, you know? And really, the only thing we've learned over these wars is how better to kill each other, and how, how many more people we can kill at the one time, you know. That's the only thing that we've learned over wars.

As I noted in the introduction, Mel started to give me a description of how mouse-holing worked, but at the moment of going "in with your gun and, you know. So..." he stopped, and then made an issue with the nature of our talk. When he said "how much good does it do you to recall it", he was referring to himself, but he could also have been addressing the question to me and to anyone else who might one day listen to or read his story. In raising this question, Mel pointed out that behind the language of mouse-holing, clearing, slogging, raking and bludgeoning, the basic action was killing – "the only thing we've learned over wars". In interrupting my line of questioning to raise his own, Mel raised killing as the essential and problematic issue of war.

This points to the value of an interpersonal, dialogical research method in which I presented myself as someone willing to be challenged. It also points to the value of eliciting spoken narrative, witnessed in the moment of its expression. If I had only corresponded with Mel in writing, he probably would not have included this moment which was critical in both senses of

the word – it was a critique of our interview process, and it was a pivotal moment in my understanding of my research. The critique came about after Mel had started to answer my question and then became uncomfortable to the point that he stopped himself and shifted from his detailed answer to make a general evaluative point. If he had been answering my questions in writing, he would have had time to manage his discomfort, regain composure, and resume his answer to my question while editing his words according to whatever content and emotional register was most comfortable to him (see Goody 2000:149). The process of losing composure and regaining it would almost certainly have been excluded from the final textual product that he would have given me. Also, Mel probably would not have included his evaluative point about killing, as it was "not what I had asked for".

In my interviews with many Ortona veterans, I found that veterans expressed feelings of concern and discomfort with acts of killing, regardless of whether or not they knew that they had killed. This discomfort contrasts with the image in Zuehlke's Ortona book of a veterans' collective memory that is unaffected by killing. Indeed, it is dissonant to the affective order of Canadian Remembrance discourse. It is to these dissonant narratives of the Battle of Ortona that we will now turn for the remainder of this dissertation.

## Chapter Five: The Ghosts of Ortona

### Christmas Spirits, 1943-1998

I remember sitting in his bright, well furnished living room on a cold October day when he told me about the ghosts that returned every Christmas. I told him that I was interested in doing research on war veterans. He told me that every veteran has a different story. "That's **his** story. That's **his** war." He said it with emphasis on the possessive.

The living room was far removed from the scenes in Ortona that were described in December 1943 by the CBC's Matthew Halton:

An epic thing is happening amid the crumbling and burning walls of the compact town.... For seven days and seven nights the Canadians have been attacking in Ortona, yard by yard, building by building, window by window. And for seven days and seven nights, the sullen young zealots of a crack German parachute division have been defending like demons. Canadian and German seem to be both beyond exhaustion and beyond fear. The battle has the quality of a nightmare.... The splitting steel storm never stops and the men in there are as if possessed (quoted in Zuehlke 1999:347).

The quality of a nightmare, as if possessed. Who knows how well the correspondent knew the minds of the men inside Ortona. This was, at least, the correspondent's impression after having followed the Canadians since the Sicily landing five months earlier. A nightmare, as if possessed.

Yet it was Christmas. On Christmas Eve back in Canada, an editorial in *The Globe and Mail* observed:

### THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

December 25 is Christmas in Ortona, Italy, as it is in Canada. For the battle-weary Canadians pushing their way through its tattered streets it will be another day of fighting, of killing, and of dying. Still it will be Christmas for them, too, symbol of the universal peace for which they fight.<sup>1</sup>

On Christmas Day, in the midst of the battle, the Seaforth Highlanders held a dinner inside the recently captured church of Santa Maria di Costantinopoli. Companies of the regiment were called back of the line to the church, one at a time, to have a meal while a signals officer played the organ and the regimental padre led some of the men in singing carols. When their turn was up, the men of one company returned into the battle, and another company was called back from the line. The rotation continued until after dark. Meanwhile, in a Christmas Day broadcast, Prime Minister Mackenzie King declared that the Canadian soldiers were fighting for Christmas:

### 'CHRISTMAS WHAT CANADA IS FIGHTING FOR' – MR. KING

"At this Christmas season you have reason to rejoice that you are fighting to preserve the spirit of Christmas itself," states Prime Minister Mackenzie King in a message to be broadcast Christmas Day to Canadians serving in the Mediterranean area.... To the Canadians' comrades-in-arms, the prime minister extended warm greetings. They were joined in a militant brotherhood to uphold in arms the Christian ideal of human brotherhood.<sup>2</sup>

On the same day, and the same front page of the newspaper on which the Prime Minister's Christmas message appeared, it was reported that the Canadians were "digging" the Germans out of Ortona at bayonet point:

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1 *The Globe and Mail*, December 24, 1943, p.6.

2 *Toronto Daily Star*, December 24, 1943, p.1.

### CANADIANS DIG LAST NAZIS OUT WITH BAYONETS

Fighting in snow and rain, the Canadian First Division is digging the last Germans out of Ortona with bayonets, it was announced today.... A military commentator said that the enemy still held one corner of Ortona and that many of the Germans were sticking to the death rather than retreat. This had turned the Canadians' struggle for the city into a house-to-house campaign with bayonets and small arms.<sup>3</sup>

Preserving the Christmas spirit, by digging Germans with bayonets. The above report about "last Germans" in "one corner of Ortona" was misleading in at least this one respect: the Germans were hardly near-defeat on the 24th. The battle was to continue for four more days; the Germans only abandoned the city on the 28th. When he entered the town on December 28, Canadian war artist Charles Comfort was overwhelmed: "The familiar world had disappeared, and in its place a grotesque and malignant forest of ruins crowded all about us, leaning, tottering crazily, reeking with the malodorous stench of death" (quoted in Dancocks 1991:186). Comfort was especially disturbed by the sight of the destroyed San Tommaso church (Figure 6), which looked to him as if someone had cut it with a knife: "as if a mighty cleaver had struck down through the dome and split it in half like a butchered deer" (quoted in Dancocks 1991:186). He was too upset to paint that day, but when he returned the next, his first subject was the church (Figure 7).

### **The Story of a Church**

In late 1997, the Chairman of the Three Rivers Regiment Veterans Association, Edmund (Ted) Griffiths, began to organize what he termed a "Christmas reconciliation dinner" to be held in a church in Ortona for both Canadian and German veterans of the battle. His plan was to recreate

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<sup>3</sup> *Toronto Daily Star*, December 24, 1943, p.1.

the Seaforths' Christmas dinner at the church of Santa Maria di Costantinopoli, and this time invite the Germans to join the Canadians. He submitted a funding proposal to Veterans Affairs Canada to finance a contingent of thirty Canadian veterans of Ortona who, it was proposed, would meet up to thirty of their counterparts from the German First Parachute Division. When his funding request was rejected, Griffiths turned to the Canadian public for support. A public fundraising campaign started in August 1998, and by the end of September it had already exceeded its goal, ensuring that the Christmas reconciliation would take place in December 1998. It was through the media coverage that I heard about the Ortona initiative, and I asked to meet Ted as part of my pre-fieldwork for my project on war veterans.

When we met in his living room, Ted told me that the idea of a Christmas dinner with the Germans came from the late padre of his regiment, Joseph L. Wilhelm. Ted recalled that some years after the war, he and Wilhelm had talked about the Seaforths' Christmas dinner in Ortona and Wilhelm had said they should go back some day "and this time invite the Germans". My conversation with Ted was not a formal interview, and it was at the beginning of my research when I was not sure what to ask. Even if I did not have my notes, however, I would recall clearly what Ted told me that morning about his troubled memory of Christmas Day. Now, fifteen years later, I have learned that behind the main story that he told me, there was a hidden one. The hidden story gives added meaning to his words and helps to make sense of his account of ghosts and reconciliation.<sup>4</sup>

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4 In the first chapter, I introduced BenEzer's (1999) concept of the hidden story which refers to "an event which was not narrated in the main story" but which comes out later "accompanied by distressing emotions such as mourning, grief, shame or guilt which were not previously expressed during the telling of the story" (3). In Ted's case, the emotions were already present in the main story, but as I will explain shortly, Ted's accounting of his emotions including his need to reconcile did not quite make sense to me, and I later learned that this was because a particularly traumatic event was missing from the original story. As Neimeyer (2004) observes, "empathic failure" on the part of the listener sometimes occurs because "critical aspects of the plot structure of the traumatic narrative... remain hidden" by the narrator (56).

He was trying, he said, to "bury the ghosts of Ortona". When I asked Ted if he had ever been back to Ortona, he replied yes, in 1968 and 1993. He wanted to restore his enjoyment of Christmas, which he said had "never been the same" since the battle. Sitting in his armchair on a thin bright morning, he told me that on Christmas morning in 1943 he drove his tank down an Ortona street into a square, accompanied by Seaforth Highlander infantrymen. In a church across the square, the Germans had a large machine gun position. The Germans in the church opened fire and Ted saw the Seaforths fall around his tank. "They all fell down like a bunch of dolls." He turned the gun of his tank on the church and fired a shell that blew in the church face and buried the Germans in a pile of rubble. "That's how I spent my Christmas." Ted told me that every year since the war, when Christmas approached, when the advertisements and the music started to appear, he became depressed. To his dismay, the depression at Christmas had worsened rather than subsided over the years. In 1993, in an effort to "bury the ghosts", he returned to Ortona with his twelve-year-old grandson. They found the church that he had destroyed. He saw it had been repaired, and inside the church with his grandson, he "cried fifty years' worth of pain". Before leaving, he wrote a cheque and gave it to the priest, explaining that it was a donation and an apology "for shooting his church".<sup>5</sup>

In the story that Ted told me on that occasion, the focal object is the church. He drove his tank into the church square; Germans shot from the church; he shot and destroyed the church; he returned to the church on the fiftieth anniversary of the battle and had an experience of emotional catharsis and atonement. In the restored church, he released the tears that he had not been able to

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5 The church that Ted played a role in destroying (it would be unfair as well as inaccurate to say that he alone destroyed it) was Santa Maria delle Grazie, not the San Tommaso church that Comfort painted. Ted's experience of the "ghosts" becoming worse with time is consistent with Hunt's (2010) observation that "war-related psychological difficulties may increase with age" (155) due to loss of work and family commitments that had facilitated avoidance of traumatic memories, and other environmental and cognitive changes that prompt "life review" or reflections on unresolved issues of the past (94, 140-155 passim).

cry fifty years earlier. What this story fails to explain, however, is why Ted still needed to return. He had seen the church restored; he had released his tears and atoned; but his Christmas was still haunted and in ruins. Something was missing. He told a story about a Christmas trauma, but the story seemed complete, with a satisfying conclusion according to its manifest content, ending in apparent redemption. Why was Ted still haunted by Ortona? What were the ghosts?<sup>6</sup>

These questions did not occur to me at the time of my fieldwork. I moved on to other interviews and did not make it back to interview Ted. Now, fifteen years later, reviewing my notes, the media reports, and Ted's writing, the questions arise and I look for answers.

### **The Proposal: A Christmas Dinner to Reconcile**

In Ted's proposals to VAC, it is hard to discern a clear rationale for the Ortona reconciliation.

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6 At the time of our meeting, and for many years afterwards, I interpreted Ted's reference to ghosts as idiomatic. I assumed that he was referring to feelings and images, perhaps dreams, but not necessarily of persons nor any kind of supernatural being. It is common to use the idiom of ghosts and haunting to refer to a "troubled memory of a past event" (Kwon 2008a:12). The idiom is a way of speaking about the "vivid existence" in the present of "unresolved griefs and excessive losses" from the past (Carsten 2007:11). In Ted's case, however, it becomes clear later in this chapter that his ghosts are in fact memories of people who died in Ortona. While I still believe that Ted was referring to an experience of memory, not of the supernatural, there is value in comparing his experience with Vietnamese supernatural beliefs about the war dead (Kwon 2008a, 2008b). Many Vietnamese people believe in the real existence of ghosts and engage with them via everyday rituals (and occasionally spirit possession). Many of these ghosts are civilians and combatants who died during the decades of civil war and wars with France and America. The Vietnamese state has repressed the customary ghost beliefs and practices, not only in the name of modernizing the nation but also, Kwon (2008a:25) suggests, because these customs threaten the state commemoration of war which privileges a select group of "meritorious" dead who serve as ideological exemplars (i.e. those who died while serving in the Vietnam People's Army). In their unofficial and surreptitious ritual practices, Vietnamese people do not discriminate in favour of the "heroic" dead; they interact with and propitiate the ghosts of civilians and "enemy" soldiers alike, including dead soldiers from the South Vietnamese Army, France, Algeria, the USA and South Korea. This "cosmopolitan" haunting (Kwon 2008b) is subversive to the state's political promotion of the national war dead. Kwon (2008a:100-101, 2008b:33) suggests it is an extension of empathy based on the widespread experience of "bad death" in Vietnam, which has led many Vietnamese to relate sympathetically to the ghosts of strangers, even malevolent ghosts, as "other people's ancestors". Ted and the other veterans in this dissertation do not necessarily believe in ghosts as real beings, as many Vietnamese do; however, the veterans' experience of being in various ways haunted by the deaths of enemy soldiers is, like the Vietnamese ghost practices, subversive to the national discourse of war commemoration. When we summon the dead in Remembrance ceremonies (as if the war dead are speaking through us when we recite "In Flanders Fields") it is only supposed to be the Canadian dead who are revived.

Indeed, the meaning of "reconciliation" was never to my knowledge articulated in any of the discourse surrounding the event. Ted's proposals stress the value of meeting "a former enemy at the site of their battle" without explaining why that is valuable. Perhaps the value is in the putting to rest of animosity. In the texts of his proposals, Ted described the initiative as "very much in keeping with the compassionate Canadian national character" (Griffiths 1997:2). Further rationales were the unprecedented nature of the event ("never before have Canadian army veterans suggested a dinner of reconciliation with a former enemy at the site of their battle"), the remembrance of the battlefield Christmas dinner ("the date of Christmas – the high point of the Christian year – lends added significance to the event"), and the ageing of the veterans (suggesting that little time remained for such an event to take place) (Griffiths 1997:2). In a second proposal, submitted in July 1998 after VAC had denied funding, Griffiths reiterated the unprecedented nature of the veteran-organized reconciliation; the significance of Christmas; and the idea of Canada as "a kind, compassionate nation" (Griffiths 1998:1).

The reiteration of "compassion" is notable. The attribution of the sentiment to Canada suggests that Ted's motivation was to show compassion to the Germans. But if that were so, it raises the question, why would the Germans need compassion, now, in 1998? Was the compassion really for them?

Veterans Affairs declined Ted's funding request on the grounds that its budget was limited, and pointed out that it was organizing a pilgrimage to Italy in May 2000 to commemorate the country's liberation (Gamble 1998). Ted replied that "the battle took place at Christmas, not in the month of May" (Griffiths 1998:2). Finally, he appealed to the importance of honouring the war dead, noting the words in the VAC Commemoration Program: "Dead men can't explain the importance and significance of their deeds. Dead men can't celebrate their accomplishments."

Here, Ted was appealing to the focus of Veterans Affairs on commemorating the Canadian war dead. The problem with this argument was that the commitment to honour the dead was already being met by existing VAC pilgrimages to overseas war graves including those in Italy. Although Ted's plan included a trip to the Moro River Canadian War Cemetery, honouring the war dead was not the main objective of his proposal, and this made it harder to connect with the conventional forms of remembrance supported by Veterans Affairs.

The distinction of Ted's Christmas reconciliation dinner was the plan to meet the enemy, and he insisted that it had to be at Christmas. The focus on Christmas was not merely calendrical, in the way that one might observe any event on the anniversary of its occurrence (Connerton 1989:65). Christmas had a moral or religious significance that Ted invoked in his proposal ("the high point of the Christian year") although he did not explain that significance. In fact, many Christians would dispute Ted's point about Christmas, and would argue that Easter is the "high point". Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus; Easter celebrates his death and resurrection, his sacrifice through which (Christians believe) all of humanity is redeemed from sin and promised everlasting life. The central rite in Christian churches is the Eucharist that commemorates the sacrifice of Jesus. Ted's point about Christmas as the high point of the year is accurate, however, in terms of the cultural life of many contemporary nations where Christianity has been a dominant religion. Christmas is significant as a family holiday and as a children's holiday – but the significance that is most obviously pertinent to Ted's project is the association between Christmas and peace. Of course, Christianity has frequently condoned and even encouraged the pursuit of war. Nevertheless, in Western societies, Christmas has effectively become a calendrical reminder of the ideal of peace, an end to violence, which is a strong theme in Christianity. English speakers are reminded of this ideal in many of the popular Christmas carols which

celebrate the Annunciation to the Shepherds, the passage in the Bible in which angels tell a group of shepherds about the birth of Jesus and then proclaim "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). This was the Christmas spirit that Prime Minister King was referring to when he suggested that the Canadian soldiers in Italy were "fighting for Christmas".

### **Troubled and Untroubled Christmas Memories**

What did the Canadian soldiers in Ortona feel about "fighting for Christmas"? When Ted told me "that's how I spent my Christmas" after his story of the violence in the square, he was inviting me to understand implicitly that there was a horrible contradiction between his experience and the meaning of the day. Later in my research, I spoke with other veterans who felt a similar painful contradiction when they remembered Christmas Day in Ortona. The Christmas dinner that was organized by the Seaforths was welcome for some, but deeply troubling for others. For Wilf, the signals officer who played the organ during the dinner, it was a positive, almost triumphant celebration. Wilf seemed to have experienced the Christmas dinner as powerful enough to transfigure and pacify the material realities of the violence that surrounded the soldiers. When I interviewed Wilf, he told me:

And they [the quartermaster's staff] came up with a meal that was cooked right behind the church with roast pork, one or two pigs were involved, in liberating the Christmas dinner. Then, it was amazing to see the fellows coming in. They couldn't believe that at 10 o'clock there was going to be a Christmas dinner, and then another one at noon, another one at two, and another one at four. Between four and six, there were two hours allowed for each company. And you know they came in tired, absolutely grizzly, unshaven, had a, very little sleep, they came in all of a sudden they heard some music and they saw some goodies on

the table. Roast pork and vegetables, apples and fruit, chocolate bar, a bottle of beer, and uh, that was the Christmas dinner for them and oh my god this is impossible but you know there it was. They managed to scrounge, the quartermaster's staff managed to prepare the food, get it served hot, and also get tablecloths and cutlery, it was liberated from somewhere. It was liberated from various homes I think, probably.

The "liberation" of Italy was ironic to many Canadian soldiers, and they subverted the idea by applying the word "liberating" to their casual appropriations (or thefts) of Italian property, such as food and wine. Here, though, Wilf used the word without a hint of irony, as if it were merely synonymous with getting things organized. The same earnestness, resistance to irony, and desire to transcend the messy, contradictory reality was evident in Wilf's effort to make the violence of battle consistent with Christmas.

**Were you playing the organ the whole time?**

Yeah.

**Did it feel like Christmas?**

Oh yeah. Yeah, because you know there's the spirit. The spirit of Christmas is love, and thanksgiving, and I always, sometimes I've compared it as a tremendous gift, the gift of that supper that was given on the inspiration of the CO,<sup>7</sup> and put into effect by the staff, could be rather vaguely compared to the greatest gift ever given to mankind on that first Christmas, one thousand nine hundred and forty-three years earlier. If you want to get down to basics, that's the thought that occurred to me, that was a tremendous thing that Christmas dinner. And you know everyone's trying to compare the terrible sacrifices that are made, the killing that goes on, with, with Christmas, and oppose to man's idea of Christmas, of peace, peace and goodwill throughout the world. How can you compare those two, ever? Well there's that very vague comparison that I made up in my mind and I thought well, yeah there is something to that. And instead of the star up there in the sky guiding the wise men it was a signal flash, a signal light, from one of the companies. They use varied signal missiles to

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7 Commanding Officer

signal, we have captured the enemy, or we are, these signals had, had a meaning. Sometimes if patrols were out in the area you'd get a, just a white light would be thrown up by the enemy. There's a very vague comparison there between the star of Bethlehem and the star from the forces. That's, and then you try to connect it up still more by, by singing carols. And the carols are all, all connected, aren't they, with the birth of Christ.

For Wilf, the "connection" between Christmas and the surrounding battle was heartwarming. For other veterans, however, the appearance of Christmas in the midst of battle was problematic, troubling, even uncanny. When I asked David about his memory of the Christmas dinner, he repeatedly stressed its "unreality" and called it "baloney".

But there was no celebration, no anticipation of Christmas that I, that I can recall.

**During the day, Christmas Day, uh, do you recall if you were looking forward to this dinner? You and your men**

I think we were looking forward to being taken out of the line for a little while and getting a hot meal, we knew we had a hot meal coming up. But that's the only uh, perception I had. I wasn't thinking of Christmas Day as a holy day of any kind.

**And what was it like when you got back to the, to the church?**

Oh, unreal. Uh, to sit down, we sat on, to, tables, I forget if there was a tablecloth or not, I think so, but anyway uh, it was a well laid on dinner with cutlery and dishes and uh, and uh, we had a bottle of wine, a bottle of beer each.

**A bottle of beer.**

Mm hm. Yeah that came up somehow. And uh, they had the organ with Wilf Gildersleeve, you'll like to talk to him about this, he was playing the organ and they had a little sing song going. But it was unreal, really.

**You say it was unreal, what do you mean by that?**

I mean it's, to come back out of action and sit down at a, at a at a good dinner.

People Christmas singing Christmas carols and Joy to the World I thought oh, baloney. It was hard to uh, hard to realize, what was going on, and it was even harder in a way to, leave, go back in.

For David, the celebration of Christmas was an unwelcome change of perspective. When he said "it was hard to realize what was going on," he might have been referring not only to the cognitive difficulty of grasping the reality around him, inside the church, but also to the emotional trouble in being confronted with a "spirit" that was so contradictory to the task to which he had to return. In the midst of that battle, described by Halton as a "nightmare" in which men were "as if possessed", the appearance of a Christmas "spirit" was unreal. The familiar traditions of Christmas became strange when they were connected to the battle. Perhaps Christmas became uncanny. Perhaps it was David's own self that suddenly became uncanny to him, in the literal sense of the original German word *Unheimlich*, "unhomely". The feeling of not being at home with oneself, feeling a stranger to the Christian traditions of home.

Another Seaforth veteran whom I spoke to was Norman. When I asked Norman about Christmas, he looked pained. He replied in a quiet, hesitant voice:

My recollection of it is so vague. I can remember the sing alongs they had, and that sort of thing, to keep things in a cheerful sort of mood, but the rest of it is uh, pretty vague.... There wasn't really a Christmasey atmosphere. But uh, I can remember the candles. Of course there were no lights, so they had all these candles placed around. Ah, I guess that's uh, that's about all

**Was it dark inside?**

It was dark. Yep. It was, it was evening. So,

**Was it actually inside the church?**

Mm hm. Yeah.

**So you could see the altar, you could see the uh**

Yes, the altar was still intact, but the, a lot of the roof was gone. Uh, I don't know if there was a picture somewhere, of that church. It shows what was left of it. [...] I remember, maybe thinking of home, at that time. How nice it would be to be home, yeah.

**Did it feel like it was Christmas?**

No. Not at all. No, there was no atmosphere there to make it feel like Christmas. Anyway, I hope those things never happen again.

Norman began by stressing that his memory was "vague", "pretty vague", which may have been a description more about how he wanted his memory to remain than an accurate description of his ability to recall. Notice that, despite saying his memory was vague, he nevertheless recalled the detail of the candles, and then with further prompting from me, he added more details: the damaged roof, and his thinking about home. Notice also, however, that he attempted to cease recalling, first by suggesting that there was nothing more in his memory ("I guess that's uh, that's about all") and finally by making an evaluative point: "Anyway, I hope those things never happen again". An evaluative point conventionally signals the end of a story (McLeod 1997:48).

Norman's body language, voice and the look in his eyes also told me of his anxiety, and I followed his cue to change the topic away from Christmas.

What was it specifically about the battle that made the Christmas spirit so disturbing to some veterans, to the point of anxiety? Thus far, I have only hinted at what I take to be the central issue: the soldier's act of killing, or preparedness and determination to kill. To some readers, this point may seem obvious. As I argue in this dissertation, though, it is a point that is systematically negated, hidden, or denied in Canadian war remembrance. According to the cultural conventions

of Remembrance, Canadian soldiers are almost never imagined as agents of violence, or at least never imagined as being affected in any way by their agency as perpetrators of violence.

However, if this was the key point of contradiction between Christmas and the battle, it was rarely expressed directly by veterans. Wilf pointed to it – "the killing that goes on, with, with Christmas" – but for Wilf, the contradiction did not appear to be troubling. I tried putting it to Denis, another veteran:

**One thing I was wondering, it's something of a paradox I guess, and I think this is why people are constantly interested in the Christmas dinner at Ortona is, to celebrate Christmas in the middle of a battle, and then those guys that came back, to sing carols and eat their dinner, then after doing that they'd go back out to the front line to, basically to try to kill more Germans. Was that, obviously it sounds strange today, but was that something that was strange to you at the time?**

I wouldn't say strange, no. It was something we were very grateful for, no matter what our religion or anything else. Just the idea that we could get a really good meal after, you know, uh, some of the guys had had nothing but corned beef and hard tack, water if they could get it and tea if they could brew it sort of thing, so they hadn't exactly been livin high off the hog. And to come back here was a great contrast, great contrast. But I don't think anybody thought too much about the apparent celebration of the Prince of Peace birthday. And uh, no, I don't know what other people think about that, but I know what you're saying, that it does seem. But what were we to do, what were we to do? Say hey, now we've sung some carols we don't want to kill anybody? I don't think anybody really, it, it was, it's a matter of survival! You know.

Denis was less evidently troubled than Norman and David when it came to remembering Christmas in Ortona. Indeed, his relatively untroubled manner in speaking about the war was probably a factor in my courage to ask him so directly. Denis's lack of troubled affect seems to have been achieved by his negation of Christmas, as opposed to Wilf's negation of violence. Denis began his answer by relativizing religion ("no matter what our religion or anything else")

and moved on to suggest that nobody "thought too much about the apparent celebration of the Prince of Peace birthday". Denis's choice of words performed the very action of "not thinking much" that he spoke of, as he called the Christmas dinner an "apparent" celebration (i.e. not a real one) of the "birthday" (a mundane, non-sacred occasion) of the "Prince of Peace" – instead of naming Jesus, Denis opted for the term for Jesus that highlights the very significance associated with Christmas (peace) that he was negating.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, he accepted my suggestion of a "paradox" while stressing that it meant nothing to him, nor (he presumed) to the majority of his comrades. Instead, Denis found the Christmas dinner as just "a really good meal".

As Ted had told me, every veteran has **his** war experience. Christmas would not have a strong emotional significance for all Canadians in Ortona, even for those who were nominally Christian; furthermore, different roles and experiences in combat might have conditioned their responses to the appearance of Christmas "spirit" as either welcome or uncanny. For example, Wilf and Denis were both signals officers; although they were frequently engaged in the front line, they were not as frequently called upon to use a weapon. On the other hand, David and Norman were riflemen, and Ted was a tank commander who – as we have seen – used his gun to inflict lethal fire on the enemy.

Which returns us to the question about Ted's ghosts and the failure of his story to account for them. Recall that his story was about destroying a church on Christmas Day. On his trip to Ortona in 1993, he had seen the church restored and had atoned for what he had done to it. Yet there he was in 1998, declaring that he remained haunted, and organizing a "Christmas

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8 Denis was recalling the Bible words from Isaiah (9:6) which are also the lyrics of the rousing twelfth movement chorus of Handel's *Messiah* that is performed every Christmas: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

reconciliation dinner" to bury the ghosts. What was the purpose, or the hope, in reenacting the Christmas dinner, this time with the Germans?

### **Projected Meanings of Reconciliation**

It is understandable that Ted's personal motivations, whatever they might have been, were hidden behind generalities in his proposal to Veterans Affairs. After all, in the proposal he was not speaking only for himself; he was proposing a group pilgrimage for thirty veterans. Then, in the fundraising campaign to support his project, the meaning of the Christmas reconciliation dinner was subject to further transformations. As journalists and politicians took initiatives to mobilize public support, the idea of the reconciliation dinner became an occasion for demonstrating support for veterans and displaying national pride in a manner consistent with conventions of Canadian war remembrance that were then being revitalized (see Chapter 2).

While the public campaign was remarkably supportive and successful, it gave little attention to the themes of compassion and Christmas spirit that were emphasized in Ted's proposal. Instead, the campaign was framed as a popular uprising against a federal Liberal government that was purportedly insensitive to soldiers and veterans. The theme of government or liberal-elite insensitivity to veterans was already strong in the public imagination at that time due to the recent (January-February 1998) controversy over the plan to add a Holocaust Gallery to the Canadian War Museum, a plan which was strongly opposed by veterans' groups, resulting in a Senate hearing, rejection of the plan, and much media attention to veterans' grievances against the perceived failures of the War Museum to recognize their achievements and sacrifices (see Chapter 2).

In early August, news of VAC's rejection of Griffiths' proposal made it to the media and to the Official Opposition Veterans Affairs Critic. The Critic, Peter Goldring, happened to be a Member of Parliament from Edmonton, the home of one of the regiments (the Loyal Edmonton Regiment) that was to be included in the Christmas reconciliation. Goldring issued a press release declaring, "Liberal Grinch Steals Christmas From Canada's Ortona Veterans" (Goldring 1998a). His office distributed fundraising letters that declared, "Ordinary Canadians will make it right. Canadian pride will make it happen." *Ottawa Sun* columnist Earl McRae (1998a) declared a "People's War" to send our veterans to Ortona. McRae (1998a, 1998b, 1998c) updated *Sun* readers regularly on the progress of fundraising, as donations came in from local Ottawa businesses, organizers of the Ottawa Exhibition who solicited visitors' donations, a country music singer, a charity golf tournament, the Lions Club, Nepean city council, Nepean firefighters, Canadian Tire, Ottawa air traffic controllers, and many individuals. A Lions Club member raised \$3200 by selling decals with the message "If you love freedom, thank a vet" at malls around Ottawa accompanied by a Patsy Cline impersonator (McRae 1998c).

The fundraising campaign led by Goldring and some journalists appealed to Canadians' more aggressive sentiments, in contrast to the compassion that was the primary sentiment mentioned in Griffiths' proposal. As noted above, *Sun* media described the fundraising as a "people's war". In much of his publicity, Goldring described the veterans' desire to meet the Germans in these terms: "After 55 years, some veterans are simply curious; others wish to bring closure to long-held animosities" (Goldring 1998a). However, the emphasis in Goldring's appeals was the need to honour the fighting abilities of the Canadians and ensure respect from the Germans. The fact that Germans were planning to meet the Canadians was treated as a challenge that had to be met or else our nation and veterans would be shamed. Goldring asserted the need to

"show Germans and the world that Canadian soldiers are second to none as tenacious fighters" (Goldring 1998b) and raised the concern of "scrutiny" by "foreign countries" of our commitment to celebrate our military victories (Goldring 1998c). The hardness of the battle was emphasized, and receiving respect from Germans was given as a reason for the Christmas dinner in Ortona: "Ortona is where Canadians proved their 'mettle' in the face of a crack German army.... Ortona established a respect by the Germans for their Canadian foes that only they can truly describe. That is why many Canadian veterans want to return to Ortona this Christmas" (Goldring 1998d). At the same time, this bravado was accompanied by messages affirming peace: "It is a celebration of our international commonality of a desire for peace. It is a true Christmas story" (Goldring 1998d).

The fundraising discourses combined a celebration of peace with a celebration of Canadian aggression. In doing so, the fundraising discourses repeated, as a sort of faint echo, the contradictory evocation during the Ortona battle of the Christmas spirit alongside the killing imperative.

The events of the reconciliation were covered by the *Ottawa Sun*, Southam News, the *Toronto Star*, and the CBC. The first stories from Ortona focused on the Canadian veterans' visits to the Canadian cemetery at Ortona, and reported on the familiar theme of veterans remembering lost comrades. On December 24, the Germans arrived. For all the concern that had been raised in the media and Goldring's campaign about the danger of losing face if Canadians did not match the German interest in the Ortona reconciliation, in the end only six German veterans attended, with no financial support and no media interest from Germany. The Germans socialized with Canadians at the bar of the hotel where the Canadians were staying. The dinner was held that evening of the 24th, and on Christmas Day the Canadians and Germans travelled to Montecassino

to visit the Commonwealth and German war cemeteries there.

As the meaning of reconciliation had never been clearly articulated in the discourses around the Ortona reconciliation dinner, the media struggled to find ways to declare that it had been achieved. The *Toronto Star* reported on gestures of goodwill: Canadian John Matheson chose not to wear his medals because the Germans were not wearing theirs; Frank Johnson refused to estimate (to a journalist) how many Germans he had killed; Joseph Klein, spokesman for the German delegation, presented the Canadians with a German map of Ortona (Di Manno 1998). In the *Star's* story, interestingly, most of the sentiment reported was on the German side, as it quoted German statements of respect for Canadians and appreciation that the Germans had been invited to participate in a remembrance activity. Klein told the *Star* reporter: "In Germany, we are never allowed to speak of it [their war experience].... One of the reasons I came here, on this trip, was so that I could talk about the war again with many other soldiers. There is so much to say" (Di Manno 1998). In the *Star* report, the Ortona reconciliation was implicitly a gift from the Canadians to the Germans.

Southam News and *Sun* reports suggested that reconciliation was achieved by gestures of respect from the Germans. The Southam reporter was dismissive of the dinner: "If there was sincerity there, it was lost behind a wall of microphones and cameras, as each speaker rose to announce there was no longer animosity between men who spent years killing each other.... The dinner went as planned. But from my perspective, the real reconciliation happened Christmas Day at the Commonwealth War Cemetery here [Montecassino]" (D. Brown 1998). At the cemetery on Christmas Day, Klein presented all Canadian and German veterans in attendance with a medal he had made, called the Reconciliation Medal, and declared: "Every one of us here today was a front line soldier, so we know the horror that is war. Let us all be grateful we

survived it, and let us take a moment to remember those who didn't" (D. Brown 1998). The *Sun* described moments of camaraderie between Canadians and Germans at the bar before dinner on Christmas Eve, and suggested that the dinner itself was the key moment of reconciliation. The article notes that at the dinner, the veterans "removed their berets, which were symbols of war, and laid them down on a table, as a symbol of peace" (McRae 1998d). Ted gave a speech, thanking Canadian donors and Goldring (who attended), and concluded: "Tonight, we have made history. For the first time in the Canadian Army, a group of veterans has sat down and broken bread with a former enemy. Under God's roof, we are all His children; we are all His brothers" (McRae 1998d). However, the *Sun* reported that it was a German, Willie Fretz, who "sealed the Christmas of reconciliation" with a spontaneous apology: "We are sorry. We are sorry about everyone who lost his life. We are sorry we were your enemy" (McRae 1998d).

In the print media, the logic of reconciliation was basically that in return for Canadian compassion (in the form of the invitation) the Germans gave gifts of maps and medals, and apologized. The CBC television 25-minute special report, however, foregrounded the issue of killing, and hinted in a quotation (that could easily be missed) that at least some Canadians had been motivated by a need to apologize to the Germans. This difference in theme was probably due to the CBC's focus of attention on Ted. The CBC feature report (CBC 1999) begins with statements by Ted and the German veteran Fritz Illi on the topic of killing:

Ted: The enemy was the enemy. We fought him, we killed him, uh, without, you know, any thought. You know we just uh, we're killing Germans. Period.

Fritz: War is a terrible thing. You see the the the white colour of the eyes in your opposite, and you know exactly when you don't shoot him, he will shoot you.

The need for reconciliation was then introduced by a statement by Ted about "the ghosts of Ortona", just as he had spoken to me of ghosts when we had talked in his living room. The report proceeded to establish narrative tension by including a statement by another Canadian veteran, Bill Whorton, hinting that he struggled not to hate the Germans. On the arrival of the Germans, the CBC report shows gestures of mutual sympathy: Fretz shows concern for Matheson's head wound scars; Sam Lenko, a German-Canadian, speaks to Hugo Bauer who was marginalized because he did not speak English. The report returns to Whorton who now declares that he has gained great respect for the Germans due to their "esprit de corps". An interview with Ted follows, on the Ortona street towards the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, where Ted tells CBC correspondent David Halton (son of Matthew Halton) his story of destroying the church on Christmas Day:

The fact it was an old medieval church just didn't enter my mind at the moment. And bear in mind the business of the day was killing. Uh, the fact that it was Christmas, uh just didn't enter my mind at that time. But uh, when you survive a battle and you begin to think back at what transpired this is when all the ghosts arrive. And it is the ghosts of Ortona, it is the ghost of that church that uh, keep coming back to haunt you (CBC 1999).

The CBC report concludes with scenes of Canadians and Germans taking photographs on the main pedestrian avenue of Ortona, while the narrator David Halton tells us: "The tensions are gone now. The reconciliation is almost complete" (CBC 1999). Then, over scenes of the veterans embracing and saying goodbye, we hear Ted's voice once more. Ted has the last word in the program:

This meeting has sort of been a cleansing of the soul in many ways. It's a shedding of some of the ghosts of Ortona. They have forgiven us, and we have forgiven them, and we've come together in a spirit of friendship (CBC 1999).

In Ted's closing statement, he suggested that reconciliation was achieved through mutual forgiveness. He suggested that this was a sentiment shared by all. While that may or may not be an accurate representation of others' sentiments, it evidently was Ted's. What this statement makes clear is that Ted was troubled by his acts of killing Germans in Ortona. The "ghosts of Ortona" that haunted him were not, or at least not only, the ghosts of Canadians whose deaths Ted had witnessed; they were the ghosts of Germans whose deaths he had caused. Notice that the CBC report begins with Ted declaring, "we killed him, uh, without, you know, any thought". The lack of thought seems important for Ted, as he repeated it in a number of statements. It was presumably both the killing and the thoughtlessness about it for which Ted sought forgiveness.

However, notice that in the stories that Ted told in the CBC report, he continued to focus on the church. He spoke in general terms about killing the enemy, but in describing his own personal actions in Ortona – in his personal narrative – he told a story about "killing" a church. He described his thoughtlessness towards the church ("the fact it was an old medieval church just didn't enter my mind") and he suggested that it was the church that haunted him ("the ghost of that church... keep coming back to haunt you").

### **The Hidden Story of the Christmas Eve German**

In fact, Ted did have a story of killing a German, not on Christmas Day, but on Christmas Eve,

shortly after his Christmas dinner in the (other) church with the Seaforths. The fact that he had kept this story hidden, outside of his main story of "the ghosts of Ortona", suggests that the event was traumatic for him. One of the signals of trauma in narrative is the "hidden story" of an event which seems extraordinary yet was excluded from the main narrative, emerging only later through questioning or as an apparent afterthought (BenEzer 1999:30).<sup>9</sup> Ted's story of killing the German was hidden in the sense that he treated it as a secondary detail even though it seems to be a key to making sense of his main story about his ghosts and his need for reconciliation.

Ted's story of killing a German on Christmas Eve is told in his contribution to *Canadians in War and Peacekeeping*, a collection of Canadian veterans' narratives published in 2000. In his written account of the battle of Ortona, Ted describes how at the end of a long day of combat on December 24, he joined a platoon of Seaforths at the church of Santa Maria di Costantinopoli for Christmas Eve dinner. "It was a pleasant break, even if only for a few minutes" (Griffiths 2000:41). Following the dinner, he went out in the darkness to find the front line of houses controlled by the Seaforths, to consult with the Seaforth officers whose sections he would be supporting the next morning with his tank. "Had I known what the next hour would bring, I might have been tempted to remain in the church and ask for a second helping" (41). In the dark narrow streets, Ted became disoriented and lost.

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9 Another signal of trauma could be Ted's confusion about time. He suggests that he killed the German on Christmas Eve after his dinner with the Seaforths. However, the dinner was on Christmas Day, not Eve. (This is corroborated by the Seaforths war diary, the diary of the Seaforths Padre Durnford, and all of the Seaforths veterans whom I interviewed about the dinner.) It is possible that during the chaotic battle, Ted lost track of what day it was. Many of the soldiers were sleep-deprived; one veteran told me he didn't remember sleeping during the entire battle (Maurice White, quoted in Chapter 9). Perhaps in Ted's family it was customary to have the main celebratory dinner on Christmas Eve. Another possibility is that he wanted to dissociate the killing from Christmas Day. Either scenario would be a case of what Portelli (1991) calls "chronological displacement" (15), which is the unconscious reordering of events in our memory from their historical dates to other times where they make a better "fit" according to the meanings we wish (or in Ted's case, perhaps, do not wish) to make of them.

Uncertain, I stopped near a corner, where I tried to orient myself. Suddenly, in the silence, I became aware of approaching footsteps. Not knowing who it was, and unsure of where I was, I didn't want to make any noise by using my pistol if I were forced to, so I quickly removed a commando knife I carried in the sleeve of my tunic. The faint glimmer of a silvery belt buckle as the person turned the corner told me he was German. Lunging forward, I drove the knife in deeply just above the belt buckle, then swiftly drew it upwards, effectively gutting him before he could utter a word. Realizing I was in German territory I hastily turned to retrace my steps, and eventually made contact with the Seaforths without further incident (41).

Ted returned to the body later:

Over the next day or so I saw the German body of Christmas Eve still slumped against the wall, and one day I stopped to go through his pockets where I found his service book; only to discover he hadn't reached his seventeenth birthday. Given the brutality of the day I thought nothing more of the incident but, with the passage of time, it has increasingly haunted me – and continues to do so to this day. Time has taught me how easy it is to kill, but how hard to forget (41).

Notice how Ted's description of his attitude at the time – "Given the brutality of the day I thought nothing more" – is consistent with how, in his CBC interview, he lamented his thoughtlessness when he made a general point about killing: "we killed him... without any thought". In the CBC interview, Ted kept his distance from the killing by using the collective "we" rather than the first-person pronoun "I" but notice that the enemy is still the singular "him" (see Portelli 1997c:164-66).<sup>10</sup> The unspoken, but nearly spoken idea is: I killed him without any thought. Notice also that, in the CBC interview, Ted expressed an idea of thoughtless killing in relation to the church that he destroyed:

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<sup>10</sup> Portelli (1997c) analyses the ways in which the "narrator become an impersonal entity" (164) through pronoun shifts in the narratives of American Vietnam veterans.

The fact it was an old medieval church just didn't enter my mind at the moment.  
And bear in mind the business of the day was killing.

Finally, notice the association between thoughtlessness and the age of the destroyed object in both of Ted's stories, first the church ("old medieval") and then the Christmas Eve German ("hadn't reached his seventeenth birthday"). One is too old to be destroyed, the other is too young; through the signifier of age, there is a common idea of wrongful destruction.

### **The Organizing Symbol of the Church<sup>11</sup>**

As such, Ted seems to have talked about destroying the church in a manner that expressed his troubled thoughts and feelings about killing the Christmas Eve German. Such acts of displacement are characteristic of efforts to avoid painful, traumatic memories; through displacement, the mind's attention is transferred onto less painful or less troubling objects that still allow for some expression in a safer context of the associated ideas or affect. These forms of displacement (or denial) are not simply an intra-psychic process taking place within an isolated,

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11 In this section, I consider Ted's use of the church as both a compromise-formation and an organizing symbol. According to Westen (1985), compromise-formations are practices that "allow the expression of repressed individual (or social) desires... while cloaking them in a form acceptable to the 'collective consciousness'" (249). Westen suggests that myths may serve this function; I would add that key symbols of a culture are especially open to such practices. My idea of organizing symbol is the same as Ortner's (1973) concept of "summarizing symbols" which she defines as "primarily objects of attention and cultural respect; they synthesize or 'collapse' complex experience, and relate the respondent to the grounds of the [cultural] system as a whole" (1344). These symbols are typically sacred and regarded as fundamental to the culture; examples are the cow to the Nuer, the flag to Americans, and the cross to Christians (Ortner 1973:1339). Being "thick" with "undifferentiated" meaning (Ortner 1973:1342), summarizing symbols are particularly open to a diversity of personal attachments while still maintaining the appearance of a consensus of meaning. The church is such a symbol in Western cultures.

While I find Ortner's concept useful, I think it is poorly named (which may be one of the reasons that it has rarely been used, including by Ortner, since her 1973 article). A summary is just a representation, it is not a creative activity. The symbols that Ortner describes do not merely summarize, they also organize, and in the work of organizing there is potential for newness and diversity. Thus, I prefer to use the term "organizing symbol".

individual mind. In Ted's case, we should consider that by making the destruction of the church his main story, he was not just comforting himself in isolation; rather, he was seeking comfort by finding a more socially acceptable way to share with others his painful experience. A story of destroying a church manages to convey the image of oneself as violent, along with possible associated feelings of guilt, without going into the physical (literally visceral) horror associated with killing a person with a knife. Ted may have feared that, if he had foregrounded the Christmas Eve German story, his audiences (including, for example, his grandson who accompanied him to Ortona) may have been too disturbed or alienated by the embodied violence to respond sympathetically to Ted's story of his trauma.

In saying that Ted had shifted his narrative attention onto a more comfortable and socially convenient object, I do not mean that his story of destroying the church was inauthentic, nor that it was any less significant to him than the Christmas Eve German. In the same published narrative in which he describes killing the young German, he also describes the horrible experience of Christmas Day in more vivid detail than his previous accounts to me and to the CBC. This description includes witnessing the deaths of his fellow Canadians of the Seaforth regiment and how this memory haunts him: "Every Christmas morning [since the war] I still see Seaforth bodies scattered across that damned square" (43). A notable additional detail is his memory of further killing that followed his destruction of the church face with his tank gun: "then the infantry moved in to complete the nasty work of taking out any Germans left alive" in the church rubble (42). When the Seaforths moved on the ruined church, they received fire from Germans in an adjacent hospital. "I was then forced to destroy the hospital, before the infantry could go in with the bayonet to take the paras [German paratroopers] out" (42). The use of the bayonets by Seaforths on Christmas Day may have reminded Ted of his own use of the knife against the

Christmas Eve German. The killing was happening again, and his tank was directing it, in this sacred time of Christmas and the sacred spaces of church and hospital.

The destruction of the church seemed to work as a powerful cultural as well as personal symbol that Ted could use to organize and share his traumatic experience. He was troubled by witnessing the deaths of Canadians, but he was equally if not more traumatized by acts of killing Germans. If all of these deaths, both suffered and inflicted, were "ghosts", then they could all be united in the symbol of the church which was supposed to represent (for Ted, as a Christian) a shared humanity. The act of destroying the church could also represent what Ted felt he was doing not only to others but to himself, to his own values, as he killed. Indeed, the destruction of the church may have been genuinely more traumatic to him. Some traumatic experiences are repressed through "screen memories" of associated but trivial objects that can be remembered without affect and whose meaning remains obscure; that is not the case with Ted.<sup>12</sup> Destroying the church may well have been the greater shock to him – perhaps a delayed shock from the Christmas Eve German, but also a vivid, explosive awakening to the moral significance of his actions in terms of his religious faith. There were in fact two churches in Ted's stories; the other church of the Christmas Eve dinner figures in Ted's written narrative as the last place where he experienced a peaceful moment before his trauma. "Had I known... I would have stayed in the

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12 The destroyed church might appear to be a screen memory in the way that Sturken (1991,1997) uses the concept in her analysis of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. For Sturken (1991), a screen memory "functions to hide highly emotional material, which the screen memory conceals while offering itself as a substitute" (118). However, in Freud's original definition, a screen memory "owes its value as a memory not to its intrinsic content, but to the relation obtaining between this content and some other, which has been suppressed" (Freud 2003:19). In Freud's conceptualization, screen memories lack intrinsic meaning, and that is precisely why they are remembered – because, although they are contiguous with painful circumstances, they bear none of the troubling aspects of those circumstances which are thereby repressed. (Childhood memories of apparently trivial events are the paradigmatic examples.) This does not fit with Ted's story because there is good reason to believe – given his Christian background and his emotional investment in Christmas – that the church is intrinsically meaningful to him and that his destruction of it is a painful memory. It is also significant that the church is a powerful symbol to others in Ted's culture.

church". There is a symbolic logic in Ted's stories that suggests that he lost his place in "the church" (his moral universe, his sense of himself as a good person) and that furthermore he was responsible for destroying it. And all of this on Christmas Eve and Day – on Ted's "high point of the Christian calendar".

If the destruction of the church was a powerful personal symbol for Ted, it was also a convenient way of sharing his experience with others, as a point of compromise between his horrific experiences and the comforting conventions of Canadian war remembrance. As I have noted in previous chapters, those Remembrance conventions effectively rule out from public attention any experience of killing on the part of Canadian soldiers. Conventional stories told by war veterans focus on troubled feelings associated with the deaths of comrades, not the deaths of enemies. By making his main story the destruction of the church, Ted found an organizing symbol within which he could synthesize and cloak his memories of killing. Through the organizing symbol of the destroyed church, Ted could narrate his traumatic experience while still making it possible for his audience to maintain their affective distance from killing and dwell instead on the suffering of Canadians.

Perhaps, in addition to its mediating value, the destruction of the church really captured the essence of Ted's experience and the problem of his conscience. However, the fact remains that his return to the church in 1993 – his return to the "essence" – did not leave him feeling reconciled. If the destroyed church was really the ghost of Ortona, then it could not be put to rest until he returned to the other church of his Christmas (Eve) dinner, and this time invited the Germans into it. He enacted his retrospective fantasy to stay in the church for "a second helping". With the comrades of the Christmas Eve German present, he proclaimed the ideal that he had been forced to suppress during his war: "Under God's roof, we are all His children; we are all His brothers".

And this time, this Christmas in Ortona, unlike Christmas 1943, Ted went to sleep on Christmas Eve instead of going out into the "narrow, pitch black streets" that were, he would one day write, "as quiet as a tomb".

## Chapter Six: These Prairie Farmers Are The Men

### Fun Shooting

And I said to Dougan we'll put down a couple of smoke bombs from our two inch mortar and we'll run across this open ground. Which we did. And most successfully, it was quite a surprise to all the Germans, and they were dug in just in front of us, and which we hadn't seen, but who had raised Cain with us. And then we had fun shooting them, like they were a bunch of deer when they started to move away.

That was Jim Stone, speaking about the Canadian assault on Ortona in an oral history interview in 1980.<sup>1</sup> Many years earlier, shortly after victory at Ortona in 1944, Stone was celebrated in the Canadian press as the exemplary prairie soldier:

These prairie farmers are the men who blasted and sniped their way through Ortona. The great majority of them have shooting for their hobby in peacetime and have camped in the Rockies and foothills. Maj. Stone, for instance, carries a rifle rather than the regulation officer's pistol. He has hunted moose in the Peace River country for 15 years and has no time for toys like pistols.<sup>2</sup>

Farming men who had hunted in the quiet boreal forests and the foothills of the Rockies had become soldiers and found themselves in a mediterranean landscape of vineyards and olive

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1 Stone, James Riley: *My Army Recollections* (Reel 1, Side 2). Interview by William Thackray, May 13, 20, and June 3, 10 and 17, 1980. University of Victoria Canadian Military Oral History Collection, Reginald H. Roy Collection. Stone was a Major at the time of the battle, and was eventually promoted to Colonel.

2 Gregory Clark, "Tells How Edmonton Men Attempted 'Sound Attack' in Ortona Battle," *Edmonton Journal*, January 17, 1944. City of Edmonton Archives (War of '39, Loyal Edmonton Regiment Collection).

groves, a landscape in which men got their jaws and their heads and limbs torn off by heavy machine-gun fire, and (as Sam recalls) could smell themselves dying. In the narrow streets of the coastal city of Ortona, doors and rubble piles were rigged with explosives, while tanks and mortars blew the walls out of apartment buildings, blowing beds and furniture and dishes and photographs into the streets, bringing down entire houses with men inside, cutting church domes in half like (in Charles Comfort's words) "a butchered deer". In the midst of this carnage, were men able to experience it as if they were still hunting, as if their actions were continuous with the lives they had lived before?

### **They Could Have Surrendered**

And then we had fun shooting them, like they were a bunch of deer when they started to move away. And uh, we got into a, a large house just on the outskirts of Ortona which I think at one time had been a, form of a pension, a small hotel of some kind or another.

Stone's account lives up to the image of him in the news report as a hunting man who was as untroubled by shooting Germans as he was shooting deer. When Stone's fellow officer Lieutenant John Dougan recounted the same events to me, however, his words were unemotional but his manner was not so easy, as if it took more effort for him to maintain his stance of detachment. Dougan spoke quickly and he stammered as he described to me the Edmontons' attack on the first house overlooking an orchard on the outskirts of Ortona. In the story below, notice how he used the term "disposed". His use of this abstract term suggests that he wanted to protect himself, and perhaps his audience, from thoughts about shooting and killing. Unlike Stone, he did not mention

any fun.

And uh, we were able to, to get up on the, we had to fight a bit to get up on the first floor, uh

**Oh when you got to the house.**

To the house, yes, these big houses, we gotta get up on the first floor, and uh, and there were some German paratroop, the first German paratroop division was defending Ortona at that time. [...] Uh, but we were able to **dispose** of those that had been in the building. And then of course we were up on the first floor, and we could look back and we could see the others in the slit trenches. [...] And so we had that advantage and the, these people had the choice of surrendering or, or being picked off. And the rest of the company came across because we were able to provide supporting fire from, from above. And uh, Jim Stone I think came, with his group came first, and then the others followed. And uh, there was uh, there was some opposition in one building right nearby and Jim was able to throw a grenade in and uh, and uh, **dispose** of that. [...] And then we went up, got up on the first floor, and uh, I remember there was a uh, a German, uh, I guess he was a sergeant major or, you know whatever their rank was, lying in the street behind the house, and he was asked, you know, he was given the option to surrender and uh he, he chose instead to open fire and uh, that was the end of him.

**How did you, everything, it, to me I imagine everything happening so quickly, how did you communicate with this German officer? You were up on the first floor of the house and, was it uh, was it you as the commanding officer who talked to him?**

No I didn't, no, no, I didn't talk to him. I didn't talk to him, no, it was a, some, one of the, one of the people with me. They, they, they showed, you know, real initiative, eh? These people were very capable of acting, uh, individually, but I don't know, but, this, he was, **dis**, you know he was **disposed** of.

Notice also that Dougan made a point of mentioning, twice, that the Germans had the chance to surrender rather than be killed:

And so we had that advantage and the, these people had the choice of surrendering or, or being picked off.

and he was asked, you know, he was given the option to surrender

Dougan's emphasis on the Germans' chance to surrender suggests his concern to justify the killing. Perhaps there was some doubt in his mind as to whether or not it was fair. Perhaps he wished that the Germans had surrendered so that he could have avoided the troubling experience of shooting them dead. Perhaps his emphasis on surrender was a way of reassuring himself that, although he and his men had (apparently) killed a lot of Germans in a single action, they had not enjoyed it, on the contrary they had tried to avoid it.<sup>3</sup> Dougan's effort to distance himself from the action through the term "dispose" and his effort to justify it through his emphasis on the chance for surrender suggests that the action was very troubling to him, although he would not say so directly. As I asked for more detail, Dougan's stammer seemed to worsen.

**How did you, everything, it, to me I imagine everything happening so quickly, how did you communicate with this German officer? You were up on the first floor of the house and, was it uh, was it you as the commanding officer who talked to him?**

No I didn't, no, no, I didn't talk to him. I didn't talk to him, no, it was a, some, one of the, one of the people with me. They, they, they showed, you know, real initiative, eh? These people were very capable of acting, uh, individually, but I

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3 In his study of the narratives of Italian partisans, Portelli (1997b) observes similar repetitions of motifs about surrender and about the enemy "shooting first" when the narratives approach the topic of killing. Portelli observes that "there was a war on, and weapons were being fired at large on both sides. In such a context, it makes very little sense to invoke self-defense and insist that the Fascists tried to shoot first – unless the narrators are obscurely trying to justify something" (134). Portelli suggests that the apparently "unnecessary denials" (137) are motivated by guilt feelings about what the partisans remember **feeling** at the time: "We had to kill them, and this may be all right; but we also wanted to kill them (some may have enjoyed the killing), and this is harder to recognize" (136-7). I am not suggesting that this is necessarily how Dougan felt, but he may have observed it in some of his comrades. (As we have seen, Dougan's superior officer, Major Stone, spoke of fun shooting.) It is also possible that Dougan repeats the motif about asking the Germans to surrender because it really pained him (and still pains him) that they did not.

don't know, but, this, he was, dis, you know he was disposed of. And then eventually, uh, you see the ones in the slit trenches weren't able to sort of, get into action because if they did we, we'd uh, our people would shoot them, eh? So they had to, they had to stay low in the slit trench, so, we got a sniper up from the uh, sniper platoon, and uh, he would wait, just, you know, if he saw, saw them at all, they they they they they they they could have surrendered, if they didn't surrender, then, bango, they.

**This uh, I, I'm curious because I've heard of some of the snipers in in the Edmontons, um, do you remember the guy's name who was the sniper?**

No I can't all I know is he was a tailor. A tailor in in in in in his, in his uh, domestic sort of occupation. But I can't remember his name.

Recall how this moment is narrated in Zuehlke's (1999) book on Ortona:

Rifles, Bren guns, and Thompson submachine guns poked out of the windows and opened fire as one. The Germans died in place (254).

In the popular history narrative, it is rifles that did the killing, as if there were no men behind the guns. According to Stone, the men behind the rifles "had fun shooting them, like they were a bunch of deer." But in the story that John Dougan told me, the task of finishing off the Germans came down to only one man, a sniper-tailor, who was left there on the top floor to watch and wait from above; and the point is made repeatedly, that the Germans would not surrender.

It is interesting that Dougan could not remember the man's name but could remember his civilian occupation. Perhaps this was something the other men found noteworthy about the sniper: that he was a tailor, he was not one of the rugged prairie farmers. Perhaps, out of battle, he used to stitch his and others' clothing. And perhaps the careful hand-eye control that is needed for this kind of work makes a tailor well-suited to the work of sniping. But what emotional skills are



**"Safe Conduct"**

things they fired over, in an artillery shell to the German lines, offering them uh

**Oh, I see**

their chance to surrender

**Did any of them do it?**

Some did.

**Really.**

Yeah, some did. But uh, not many.

**Did they fire similar things at you?**

No. No. But uh, they had lots of broadcasts, you know, radio broadcasts, that they would. Uh, tell us what we were missing.

**Really. How great it was over there**

Yeah! Yeah!

**Did that have any effect on, on guys**

No, not really

**any of that German propaganda**

No. No. But uh, I can remember uh, Chris Vokes. You've heard of him, have you?

**Chris Vokes?**

Chris Vokes

**Yeah**

The general.<sup>4</sup> Anyway, his, he gave us a talk, and he said uh, the more Germans you k... you kill, he said the quicker you're gonna get home. So that was the, his, his approach.

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4 From September 1943, Major-General Chris Vokes was the commander of the First Canadian Division in Italy.

**That was pretty harsh.**

Yeah, that's hard. Yeah. But, I guess it was a fact.

Norman had hesitated to say the word "kill": "the more Germans you k... you kill, he said the quicker you're gonna get home". Norman's wish to avoid the thought of killing made him pause, but he overcame that wish in order to share his story. His story was, implicitly, about the very same wish that had made him hesitate over the word: his wish that the Germans would surrender so that he wouldn't have to kill them. He wished that the general would be wrong. Norman did not articulate this wish directly, but it is suggested in his topic shift from the "Safe Conduct" leaflet to the general's words. The topic shift took me by surprise. The leaflet had made me think about propaganda, and this was the direction in which I started to lead the conversation. Norman, however, was not very interested in the topic of propaganda, and he abruptly turned the conversation to his memory of the general's words.

**any of that German propaganda**

No. No. But uh, I can remember uh, Chris Vokes.

The "Safe Conduct" leaflet was important enough that Norman had made an effort to find it in his souvenir box and present it to me – at first, wordlessly. He then quoted the general's words: "The more Germans you kill, the quicker you're gonna get home". The words that were missing in this conversational exchange were Norman's, about his feelings. He seemed to want the leaflet to do the talking for him.

Might the "Safe Conduct" leaflet have communicated, on the contrary, Norman's fear of dying – a wish that Germans would surrender so that there would no longer be a dangerous exchange of fire in which Norman might lose his life? Undoubtedly, Norman also felt this fear. However, even when I asked him about experiences of being shot at, he turned the topic back to his own act of killing. This happened in the course of my asking him about street fighting in Ortona. I had noticed Norman's discomfort, and I was trying to frame my questions in terms of unemotional procedures ("tasks", "work") and collective identities (Norman's unit, rather than him personally).<sup>5</sup>

**What were you doing, or what was your task, in street fighting**

Well just going building to building, but uh, the ones that we were in, happened to be uh, vacated. So uh

**How many, um, you were going around with, with a group, of other guys**

Yeah with a

**How did that**

section

**A section**

Yeah

**Like how many guys**

That's smaller than a platoon

**I see**

That's usually four or five people

---

5 Recall that these rhetorical devices are pathways through which killing "disappears" (Scarry 1985:64-70). In this case, I was the one who was trying to stay on that path.

**Uh huh. And uh, what kind of work was that, how did you do that?**

What kind of?

**What kind of work was that, how did you do that?**

Uh. Well. It was just like house clearing. And, you had to make sure there was, no Germans around. Of course. And uh. Luckily I guess, we didn't run into any. So uh. Some of the other outfits had, a hard time. You could only really take in what's going on immediately around you. You know, what, if you saw the overall picture it would be, really frightening. Anyway there was a lot of sniping, that sort of thing. And uh.

Notice that my use of the pronoun "you" gave Norman the opportunity to depersonalise his description by interpreting the subject not as the second person singular ("you, Norman") but as a collective and impersonal agent (the generic "you", as in "you had to make sure"). At first, he took this opportunity. Notice also that I followed Norman's lead to the impersonal in my next question:

**Could you tell when some, like, can you tell when somebody's shooting at you?**

I started to ask my question in the past tense ("could you tell"), which would invite a story of a specific event; however, in the course of asking, I changed the tense to the simple present ("can you tell") which invited a generic answer and made it more likely that the subject of my query (the "you") could also be taken as generic. I was unconsciously "correcting" myself in order to accommodate Norman. Nevertheless, Norman promptly abandoned this accommodation in order to tell a story of himself as the personal subject. I had also offered Norman the perspective of

being the person shot at; he took this perspective and then reversed it, identifying himself as the shooter.

**Could you tell when some, like, can you tell when somebody's shooting at you?**

Oh yeah, yeah. Usually. You can hear it. Uh. Let's see now, at uh. Agira, which was before Ortona, uh. I think I saw the bullet I don't know, go by me. And uh, uh, that was quite an experience. And uh, I, I saw the fellow who had fired the shot. And uh, I just, I just waited. And uh, then he showed himself, and I was able to uh, shoot him. That time. But that was the only time that I, I know that I shot someone.

Perhaps Norman was willing to talk about this more. Perhaps he even wanted to. On two occasions in our conversation, Norman had told stories about killing when he had not needed to: first, when I interpreted his leaflet in terms of propaganda, and second when I asked him about being shot at. On both occasions, he could have accepted my perspective, in which I was (unconsciously) offering him "safe conduct" away from his more troubling experiences; on both occasions, he changed the conversational frame in order to raise the issue of killing. In retrospect, I think that I may have been the one who lacked courage, when I asked Norman a question that led us away from his experience of killing that he had just narrated, into a general concern with what is routine or typical:

But that was the only time that I, I know that I shot someone.

**I guess it's not often that you can actually see**

No

I was leaving it up to Norman if he wanted to go into details or speak in generalities. From his point of view, he may have been leaving it up to me, uncertain what I would do if he told me more of his story.

**the**

No. No usually it's uh. So, uh. Anyway this uh. This uh. Here's a book here that uh, my son got this book for me. He got, he found it through the internet. But anyway uh, it mentions uh, a lot of the fellows.

Norman showed me the history book, and recommended this and other books to me as good sources of detail. His use of "anyway" was a form of closure. I didn't ask him any more about houseclearing.

One detail that I notice now in Norman's narrative is his use of the term "fellow". The book, he told me, "mentions a lot of the fellows", meaning his comrades from his regiment. The word "fellow" can be synonymous with "man". There are no true synonyms, however; words have slightly different shades of meaning or connotation, and "fellow" is a way of speaking of a person (usually a man) in a favourable way, with a sense of equality and common interest. It is significant that just seconds before he used the term to describe his comrades, Norman used it with reference to the German who had tried to kill him, and who Norman had then killed: "I saw the fellow who had fired the shot".

Norman told me, without telling me, that he had seen the fellow die. That was before Ortona, he told me. At Ortona, before the battle, Norman had heard the general speak of the need to kill more Germans if they wanted to go home. Norman had dearly wanted to go home. When I

asked him what he remembered of the famous dinner on Christmas Day, he told me:

I remember, maybe thinking of home, at that time. How nice it would be to be home, yeah.

**Did it feel like it was Christmas?**

No. Not at all. No, there was no atmosphere there to make it feel like Christmas. Anyway, I hope those things never happen again.

Norman had picked up the "Safe Conduct" leaflet from the ground before the battle. He had kept it flat and clean; first, somehow, in his pack throughout the war, and then back home in a shoe box for so many years. It had been the first thing he wanted to share when I went to his home and asked him to tell me about Ortona. He had wished to come home safely, but it was not only dying that he feared. The "safe conduct" had been addressed, in English and German, to another man.<sup>6</sup>

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6 Norman's attachment to his "Safe Conduct" leaflet is a thought-provoking instance of the general human tendency to keep and care for impractical objects (see D. Miller 2010). Many scholars have noted that small personal objects as well as monuments can function as memory aids (e.g. Radley 1990; Fentress and Wickham 1992; Archer 1997). However, the reasons for preserving personal items are sometimes obscure even to those who preserve them. In his study of war narratives, WWII veteran and literary critic Samuel Hynes asks himself (and the reader) "why in my attic there are two tattered pilot's logbooks, an air-wing shoulder patch, and a yellowed plastic container that once held survival gear and now is full of old photographs. I keep them, I suppose, for their reality" (1997:27). The materiality of the personal object helps to preserve confidence that an experience was real especially when that experience was not only long-ago but also in "a kind of exile from one's own real life, a dislocation of the familiar that the mind preserves as life in another world" (Hynes 1997:8). The object's materiality may be especially important when the personal memory is unsupported or rejected by dominant social memories. Hynes seems to hint at this when he suggests that "the truth [of war] is in the particulars" (26); there may be competing narratives and propaganda about the war, but at least one can hold onto an object – a logbook, a leaflet – and know that it is real and "I was there". Similarly, Archer (1997) describes how British civilians who were interned by the Japanese during WWII continue to preserve and hand down to younger family members "tangible, specific objects" from their internment, such as a spoon that an internee used every day, as "private commemorations" of an experience that has been largely forgotten in British social memory of the war (55).

Related to the preservation of memory is the preservation of identity. Tonkin (1992) suggests that "our sense of identity is bound up with objects... which reassure their owners by reminding them of what they have been" (94-95). Reflecting on Norman's leaflet, I would suggest that objects can remind us not only of what we have been but also what we aspire to be (see Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981:28). In his study of the personal mementos carried by refugees, Parkin (1999) argues that such mementos "temporarily encapsulate precluded social personhood" (313). That is, individuals who find themselves forced to adopt a new and profoundly unsatisfying identity due to extreme circumstances might retain small personal objects to preserve who they feel they really are and hope to be once more. Norman's act of preserving the leaflet through the war

## Indian Snipers and Real Killers

Norman had said:

But that was the only time that I, I know that I shot someone.

**I guess it's not often that you can actually see**

No

Norman had paused to correct himself. He was going to say, "the only time that I shot someone" but then paused to correct and modulate his statement according to the limits of his knowledge. It occurred to him that there may have been more; he just didn't know. Other veterans talked about the conditions of the battle that made it hard to know. Mel told me about Christmas Day:

**Do you remember what you did on Christmas Day?**

I don't remember sittin down to a dinner. I remember a bottle of beer, I, that, but it's not a clear, it's not a clear, I can't see me standing here having a bottle of beer.

**What do you see?**

I see, I see being up on about the third floor of a building and uh, I see me

---

may be regarded as a form of self-preservation in terms of his values, encapsulating his "good self" that he felt was at risk. The general said they had to kill to go home, and Norman found it hard to argue with that, but he could protect this leaflet in his kit as a way of reassuring himself that "I am still a person who cares about others" – preserving his identity by caring for the object. As Belk (1988) notes, "the more an object is cathected into one's extended self, the more care and attention it tends to receive" (158). Preserving the leaflet through the war may also be regarded as a compromise-formation, a way of coping without being immobilized by conflicting wishes and imperatives (Westen 1985). Finally, Norman's leaflet may also have served as a sort of anticipatory memorial, in the way that people "use material objects to create in their survivors the kind of memory of themselves which they desire" (Radley 1990:54). Many soldiers knew the significance of what they carried in their kits: if the soldier died, these items might be seen by their comrades and sent home to their families.

I regret that I did not think to ask Norman more questions about his leaflet. At the time, it seemed to me that he wanted the object to do the talking for him (that it would speak for itself) but if I had asked, he may have welcomed an opportunity to talk about the object as an indirect way of talking about himself (see Hoskins 1998).

peeking around a window and firing a shot at this window or that door, or, you know, periodically, and then going from, from that window to another, another window.

**How did you do that? Inside**

Yeah inside the house. And uh

**What were you shooting at?**

Windows.

**Other windows**

Yeah. Well, there's nobody standing there to take a shot at.

In my meeting with Gus, Rolly, Jack and Bill, I asked them to describe what they did in the battle. Rolly said:

We'd go in through the buildings and try to clear them out... A lot of this is hard to remember because you're just going into buildings and, you're firing a few shots and guys just, make a dash, you know what I mean? You may not have found a target to shoot at but you were shooting down there anyway so that no German would be there, eh?

**Did you ever actually see a German?**

Oh yeah we saw them but they were very good soldiers, they didn't make a target of themselves unnecessarily.

At this point, Jack interjected:

The thing about mortars, I fired four thousand and fifty rounds of ten pound bombs in Ortona, but you can say like, in Ortona, I never killed a soul.

Jack's friends nodded at his words. Then Rolly said to his friends:

I was just going to tell him about Norman Letendre eh?

Letendre?

Yep. [turning to me] Well Norm's number is 30851, mine is 30848. We joined up the same day back in August 15 1940. But he got 14 German paratroopers in Ortona. With a sniper rifle.

Rolly wanted me to know about Norman Letendre. I was to learn that the story of Letendre was important to many veterans. It was a story of a man who had killed too much and didn't make it home. Rolly must have been thinking of Letendre earlier in the conversation, but he used Jack's remark as a convenient segue:

I fired four thousand and fifty rounds of ten pound bombs in Ortona, but you can say like, in Ortona, I never killed a soul.

I was just going to tell him about Norman Letendre eh?

Perhaps one of the reasons that the story of Letendre was compelling to some veterans was that, as a sniper, Letendre had to know that he killed (see Bar and Ben-Ari 2005:135). Jack knew that his mortars had probably killed someone, but because he did not witness the deaths, he could choose not to know – as he acknowledged: "you can say like, in Ortona, I never killed a soul". Letendre had to know. Indeed, his knowing was well known; the count of his kills in Ortona was always mentioned when his name came up.

But he got 14 German paratroopers in Ortona. With a sniper rifle.

**Was he with you?**

No.

He was a sniper.

He was with the sniper section.

**So did you uh, did you talk to him after the battle? Did you know him?**

Yeah. I didn't talk to him after the battle. I didn't talk to him till we got back in Holland, and we were going into action, crossing the Ijssel River. That's when I saw Norm. We shook hands. He said I'm not coming back.

Is that right!

He told me, he says I'm not coming back.

Letendre was killed at the Ijssel River in the last major battle of the Edmonton Regiment. The fact that he killed so many in Ortona but did not make it home may have given his story a disturbing yet compelling resonance with the words of the general who had told them, before Ortona, that the more Germans they killed, the quicker they would get home.

The story of Letendre also seemed to be a story about the ability to feel connected to the person you killed, and the dangers of that feeling. The ability was also a vulnerability, and white veterans associated it with aboriginals. Letendre was Métis. Later in our conversation, Jack was reminded of another Indian sniper who knew when he had killed even when he could not see it. The Indian could feel the death of the other in his body.

**Now were there, were there Native guys, in uh**

Yes

**in the 49th?**<sup>7</sup>

Yes.

Indians, you mean our Indians?

Like uh, Canadian Indians?

Oh yes, this Norman Letendre I was talking about, he was a Métis.

We had one, a sniper.

And he was really good.

Atkinson, was it?

Smokey.

Smokey.

Smokey Atkinson.

You know, I'd be in the OP,<sup>8</sup> and I'd, I'd feel a presence behind me, you know? And I'd look around and he'd be there, and I'd be busy with something else, and I'd look around, and he'd be gone. He'd just come in like a, and, if he, he'd shoot out the window of the OP you know, and he'd have the rifle there like this and, he'd fire like this, then he'd lever around in. But if he hit something, he'd put his head down on his, on his arms and, stay there for a minute and then look up. And I said to him, Smokey how do you know you've hit something? Well he says it's just like killing a moose, he said. He says when I hit kill a moose, he says I can feel the shock from the moose to my shoulder. He says I know I've hit something solid but, when I miss he says I, I can't feel that. That's what he told me.

Notice that Jack was interested in the question: how do you know? Jack had fired thousands of mortars, targeting enemies who were out of sight. The question of whether or not he had killed

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7 "The 49th" is an informal term for the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, as the LER succeeded the 49th Battalion (Edmonton Regiment) and retains the number 49 on its badge as part of its heritage. The journal of the LER is *The Fortyniner*.

8 Observation Post. I did not think to ask him, but it seems that Jack was in the OP to direct fire for the mortars.

was clearly important to Jack. His story about Smokey was a story about a man who was able to know, even when he could not see. Furthermore, it is a story about a man who could feel the presence of his victim inside himself, and who showed respect for the life he had taken by bowing his head.

In some respects, Jack's story repeats the white Canadian stereotype of the Indian who is more spiritually connected to the world, who has powers of perception and feeling that the white man is lacking. Although this is a stereotype, it is also very possible that Smokey Atkinson really said that he could feel it when he killed something. In many aboriginal beliefs about hunting, the spiritual bond between the hunter and the animal is promoted, as is the hunter's responsibility to honour the animal that "gives itself" to be killed (Adelson 2002; Tanner 1979). In Cree cosmology, the spirit of the animal "may become part of the (respectful and thus, good) hunter, dissolving any discernable boundary between person and the animal" (Adelson 2002:68). In the words of one Cree:

It was said [by elders] that those who stood out as being good at catching that one kind of game, that they had the animal inside them but a very small one. The animal was always in their bodies. When this happens to a person that certain animal that he is good at killing is inside of him, then that is the reason the person is good at killing that kind of an animal (quoted in Adelson 2002:68).

Just as with white soldiers, an aboriginal soldier might have experienced the battle as in some ways reminiscent of his past hunting experience, but it is unlikely that hunting meant the same thing to an aboriginal Canadian as it meant to men like Major Stone; it is unlikely that an aboriginal hunter would have said: "And then we had fun shooting them, like they were a bunch

of deer". The story of Smokey, who said it was "just like killing a moose", undermined the metaphorical use of hunting as a strategy for emotional distance. Against the idea that soldiers were unaffected by killing because it was "just like hunting", the story of Smokey pointed out that men could also be affected by hunting, and that even animal victims could be felt, remembered and respected.

Not only could, but perhaps should. When Jack told his story of Smokey, his friends Gus, Rolly and Bill nodded earnestly. There was silence in the room before someone changed the topic.

Like the story of Smokey, the story of Letendre also undermined the use of hunting as a protective framework that could make soldiers comfortable with killing. As much as it was known how many Letendre had killed, it was also known that he had never wanted to hunt again. The use of his hunting skill to kill men in war had made Letendre disgusted with his rifle. Mel remembered this story of Letendre in the context of telling me that we should never celebrate war:

Certainly it shouldn't be forgotten, but by the same token it shouldn't be, it shouldn't be a thing that, say hey, we're going to do better next time. You know, that, that kind of thing. I knew one fellow, he was an Indian fellow, he was with the regiment, a sniper with, and he uh

**Was he at Ortona?**

Yes. He, eventually he was killed in uh, when the regiment, I wasn't with the regiment then, when the regiment moved to uh, moved to Holland. He was, he was killed in one of the last actions that they had. But he'd all, he was a sniper and he already had 17 Germans to his credit. He said I never see or want a rifle again in my life. He, he was an Indian.

**So he was going ahead, but, but felt bad about**

Yeah. Oh yeah. A lot of them were, I guess, sittin ducks, you know.

**Yeah. I guess as a sniper, that was his job, eh?**

Oh, sniper, that was his job.

Recall that Mel associated killing with psychological distress and illness; that was also the point of his story about the white "hero" who, in Mel's estimation, had become a drunkard because he had killed too much. There was a similar lesson in the story of Letendre. Gus recalled the "trouble" that Letendre got into in Ortona, after the battle. It was a crime against civilians that was serious enough that the Canadian army put him "in jail" (according to the veterans) for the duration of the Italian campaign. The veterans agreed that Letendre got into this trouble because he was drunk, and Rolly went on to suggest that the drunkenness was part of a deeper kind of breakdown caused by the emotional pain – what Rolly called the "pressure" – of killing.

But that Norman Letendre, and he, I think he's dead, yes he is dead now. So you're supposed to speak well of the dead but, he got into some trouble with some women in Ortona

Norm at the end of it yeah he got into some wine, and uh, that cost him a

And he was in jail for a while

A time in the castle for quite a while. If he hadn't have got into wine, well, the pressure must have been pretty terrible because he killed a number of snipers, and uh, probably that's when he got drinking at the end of it, the fighting was just about over.

There were also stories about Letendre's death. When I was with Sam, going through his boxes of souvenirs, we found a newspaper clipping from shortly after the battle for Ortona, written by the

war correspondent Matthew Halton. The article quoted Norman Letendre, and I read it out loud to Sam:

**Here, here it just says uh, this is, during the battle of Ortona**

Oh

**it says Norman Letendre had killed 14, 14 Germans. Uh, he said, "I used to like hunting, but when I get home I never want to see a rifle again."**

Is that right eh?

**Yeah.**

Well I'm sure Norman Letendre got killed.

**Yeah?**

You'll find that, he's in the casualty list.

**He got killed?**

Yeah he did. Got killed by a moaning minnie.

**A moaning minnie, what's that?**

Well that was uh, what they, called them a Wienenwerfel, it was a five barrel mortar, a big one, it had shells that were about that big and, about that long. And when they fired up, you'd hear, roo-roo-roo! And uh, they, they threw them, eh, and, if you happened to be anywhere near. And uh, they'd land, they'd explode, they'd uh, uncurl, a lot, the metal would uncurl like a, uh, a dandelion, eh? You know how a dandelion

**Yeah?**

Push your finger on a dandelion, how it curls down? But they, they had an awful percussion.

**Percussion.**

Yeah, a boom, eh? Just a, I guess a, it was more than a person could stand. The uh, concussion

**Oh**

would kill you, you know.

**Really.**

Yeah.

**And that's**

If you were too close

**And that's how he got**

I'm sure that's how he got her<sup>9</sup>

Another reason that Letendre was so well known was probably the fact that he had been jailed, and then released. The reason for his release from jail was significant and noted by Sam.

He was released from jail, uh, with some other guys, and he [the colonel] was bringing em up to get em in. Because the colonel asked to have him back out, because you don't put a good man like him away in jail.

**Yeah?**

You know.

**He was**

He was considered a good man, well, like he

**What did that mean, that he was a good man?**

Well, well he, he killed them Germans, he was killing Germans, and

**Yeah**

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<sup>9</sup> Meaning that's how he got killed.

and he was a good guy.

**Yeah.**

Yeah. He, he was doing his job.

Sam and the other veterans clearly regarded Letendre as a "good man" even though he was also "wild". They spoke of him sympathetically and were reluctant to tell me about his crime. By contrast, veterans spoke with ambivalence about other men who, like Letendre, were "wild" and had killed many Germans; these other men were described to me as "real killers", and sometimes as "German haters". Whereas Letendre was described as "doing his job", these other men seemed to do the job to excess. I found this description of one man in the transcript of an archived interview; this was a man who had been described to me by other veterans as a "real killer". (I have redacted his name.) In the archived transcript, a veteran remembers watching this man in action in Ortona:

Then we moved up the main street about one block... And we moved down, we were each given a street to move down... Most of our work was done by mouseholing from one place to another, but I suppose if anybody stood out in my mind at that time it was [Fred – pseudonym] who was just a crazy man... Fred would rush down the street, you know how narrow they were, he'd just push his foot in, almost a Hollywood character, he was just mad and going from place to place shooting himself in... I think the first man I'd ever seen really killed up close was at that point where we were sitting up sniping down the street, and [Fred] was driving them out of one building to the other, and they'd rush across, these paratroopers, and one of my men got this fellow completely through the neck, and it was like shooting ducks.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Interview by Dr. R.L. McDougall with Don Harley and Clifford Wood, Toronto, June 7, 1961, p.9. Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Archives.

When I was talking to Gus and Rolly, Gus said:

But he was a bad son of a gun who if a guy, if a German was wounded, he'd bayonet him, you know? He was

**Really?**

Oh yeah.

There was a look of disgust in Gus's facial expression. However, when I asked about this man again, using the term that Gus and Rolly had applied to him, Gus reversed his perspective.

**When you say [he] was a, was a real killer, does that mean that he had a lot of anger in him, do you think?**

Well he, he wasn't afraid to go around that corner there and pop-pop-pop-pop, you know? He was a fighting man. You know. Yeah he was, I shouldn't say a killer I think, he was there to do away with Germans and so he did. You know, he had to win a war, get out of here, go back to his farm.

**Did he, did he go back?**

I don't know whether [he] made it all the way or not.

Later, when I was asking them about the meaning of "German hater" – a term that I'd heard other veterans apply to some of their comrades – Rolly was reminded of the same man we'd spoken of before. Then, having made the association, Rolly once again sought to balance or retract his implied judgement of the man.

**Cause I heard a story of how the, uh, there was a German officer who tried to surrender and this guy shot him and it was explained to me that well he**

**was a real German hater.**

Well that could be [Fred] too. That's what I mean about it he's, he was uh, I don't... I wouldn't say he was murderous type or anything like that, he'd come over there to fight and that's what he was doing. That's, I don't know whether he's still alive or not. He had a farm or something out, away east of town somewhere.

Rolly made the association, and started to expand on it – "That's what I mean about it he's, he was uh" – but here, he hesitated, before making a statement that was probably as much a corrective to his own judgement as to the possible judgement that others (such as myself and my readers) might make of this man: "he was uh, I don't... I wouldn't say he was murderous type or anything".

The man whom they called, yet did not want to call, a real killer, was doing his job because he wanted to get back to his farm. The men who were described to me as "real killers" were not snipers and were not aboriginals. This may or may not be a coincidence. What made a soldier a "real killer" seemed to be that he had no mercy, no respect for his victims, and that he even seemed to enjoy it. Still, I got the sense that the less aggressive soldiers felt indebted to these men who were objects of a certain amount of fear and revulsion but who were also recognized for taking the lead and taking the greatest risks in perpetrating the (apparently) necessary violence. These men were getting the job done so that everyone could go home. Notice that on both occasions when this one particular man was discussed, Gus and Rolly mentioned his farm. Gus and Rolly felt some degree of disgust for the man's actions, but they also felt a sense of indebtedness and a desire to protect the man from judgement; their efforts to think of him positively were helped by reminding themselves that he was a farmer who wanted to go home.

### **Knocking Birds out of the Sky**

The story of Norman Letendre was particularly important to Mel. He repeated it to me many times. In every telling, Mel never failed to mention that Letendre had turned against his rifle and wished never to hunt again.

There was a fellow by the name of Norm Letendre who was a sniper with the regiment. And Norm I think... he claimed that he had about 17 to his credit. Whether he had notches on his gun or not I don't know but, how he kept track I don't know that either. He was an Indian too. A good f

#### **Was he a friend of yours?**

No. Not really. But a friend of mine by the name of Barney Pello was also a sniper and, the reason Barney was a friend of mine was that he came from the Calgary Highlanders and he knew my brother Chess. And uh, so I got to know Barney fairly well too. Although I've lost track of him. I met him in Calgary years after the war, uh, and Barney was never the type of guy that told you how many, but, how I found out that uh, that Norm Letendre had 17 to his credit, I forget how that come about, but he said I never want to see a gun after this war. But he was, he wouldn't either, because he was killed in Germany after the regiment moved on, you know.

Mel's interest in Letendre's gun and his kill count is noteworthy in light of Mel's personal story of how he narrowly missed dying, and also narrowly missed killing, when his own gun failed to shoot the German in the doorway in Ortona (see Chapter 4). When I asked Mel a general question about what sorts of things would make him remember the war in Italy, his thoughts went immediately to guns and hunting.

**Would things happen that would remind you, like, make you think, what sorts of things would make you think about Italy?**

Oh when, when you hear a gun bein fired off, you know.

**When would you hear that?**

Oh, any time you're out hunting, or anything like that, you know.

**Oh right, you used to, you used to go duck hunting, eh?**

Yeah, shotgun, yeah.

**Was it hard to start hunting again after the war?**

I'd never, I'd never hunted before. And we'd never had guns in our house before.

**When did you start hunting?**

Oh I started hunting I guess when I first could afford a shotgun, and that would be about ah, let's see I joined the Edmonton parachute club in 1964. So it'd be about 1961, somewhere in that time. You know, you're busy trying to make a living in those years, you know and uh, it wasn't much of a livin because I worked in a parts department and uh, and the only way we could make it was both of us working, my wife and I....

**So you finally got a chance to, to take up a hobby**

Yeah, I uh, guys were going out hunting, they'd say how come you don't hunt? Well, ok, I'll buy a shotgun. So I bought an Ithaca lightweight I can remember that, and uh...

Letendre had told Matthew Halton that he had enjoyed hunting before the war, but after Ortona he wished he'd never see a rifle again. Mel had never hunted before the war, but he came home and, briefly, became a hunter. Recall, from one of his stories quoted earlier in this chapter, Mel's description of Letendre's suffering:

He said I never see or want a rifle again in my life. He, he was an Indian.

**So he was going ahead, but, but felt bad about**

Yeah. Oh yeah. A lot of them were, I guess, sittin ducks, you know.

Mel thought Letendre had suffered from killing "sitting ducks". Mel came home after the war and became a killer of ducks. Mel's story of duck hunting continued:

And uh this one time when I was out hunting ducks I was laying, waiting for a duck to come over and, and across the way, some distance away but he come down so easily, a guy in a parachute. And uh, I thought jeez that looks neat, because he, he landed standing up, he didn't, no roll or anything, you know. So when I got back to town, I was 45 years old, 42 years old then and uh, when I got back to town I, without telling my wife, I made a few phone calls and found out there was a club, and I went out and joined them.

Mel concluded his story:

But I never got any pleasure out of knocking birds out of the sky, you know. Never did.

Aiming at ducks in the sky one day, he had seen a man instead. And he found a new hobby in skydiving. He told me that his wife hated it; she thought it was too dangerous, but he convinced her to let him try. He didn't know why, but it was something he needed to do.

It occurs to me now that Mel was drawn to an activity that tested his fear of death, in which he risked his own life without risking any other. It was a way of relating to the prairie without a rifle, from the perspective of a bird. Every time he went out to skydive, he removed himself from the land, and then fell back down towards it – letting gravity take him home, rather than killing – fighting only his fear, as he fell back to the land to which he and his comrades had hoped to

return – remembering those who had lost their hope.

*These prairie farmers are the men who blasted and sniped their way through Ortona.*

## Chapter Seven: Boots and Souvenirs

### **Meeting Jim**

I remember the sound of the wipers on the windshield of Sam's car as we drove up the northern highway in the early winter darkness. Sam had said this was a good time for me to visit, as his wife had gone into Edmonton with her friends to play bingo. We had spent the day "working", as Sam called it – he took the storytelling seriously – and now we were going an hour up the road to his favourite roast chicken restaurant for dinner. It wasn't snowing; the wipers were needed to clear the spray that blew from the large trucks that thundered past us carrying heavy loads of logs. Here, there were few trees, just an occasional woods among the low barren hills, and sometimes in the distance I could see the silhouette of a working pumpjack and the light of a gas flare.

We stopped at a gas station and Sam said he remembered a friend who lived nearby, who had been a sniper in the war; his friend would be a good guy for me to interview about the war. Sam called his friend Jim from a payphone, and Jim said sure, we could come over; so we travelled down a dirt road across some train tracks and into an evergreen forest to Jim's house, a little wood house with smoke coming out the chimney. Jim was short, stocky, and gruff with stubble, a contrast to Sam who was skinny and polished for the restaurant. Jim was wearing a cardigan with holes in it, and shuffled in soft plaid slippers but he told us not to take our shoes off as if it was a foolish thing to do. His kitchen reminded me of my grandparents', with a humming fridge, drugstore calendar, and a bulletin board with receipts, handwritten phone numbers, and a poppy tacked onto it. We sat in mismatched chairs around his formica table that had an ashtray in

the middle, and Jim poured us black tea in mugs with images of Alberta and "Calgary 1988" and offered us milk and sugar. Jim smiled and nodded while Sam introduced me and talked about the "work" we were doing; but then, when I asked Jim if he would talk to me about the war, he looked suddenly alarmed, and said, "I can't talk about those things." He turned to Sam and repeated, "I can't talk about those things, you know," and turned back to me and said, "I'm sorry," and I said no, that's fine. I felt bad for asking, seeing the effect it had on Jim; I had assumed that Sam had told him about my research on the phone, but evidently, Sam hadn't.

But Sam took over the conversation, saying, "Well, it's easier to remember the good times." Then Sam carried on talking about the war – I guessed, for my benefit, although I worried about the effect on Jim – but these were funny stories, about women they met in England, and Italians, making Jim smile and eventually cackle with laughter. They both laughed especially when I interrupted Sam at one point to ask him the meaning of "cathouse". The time passed with Sam telling story after story, asking Jim "do you remember" this, and "do you remember" that – the old Italian who asked them about Joe DiMaggio; stepping in shit from the donkey train; the sergeant who "liberated" wine from the poor farmers – and Jim nodding, saying "yeah, yeah", drinking his tea, smoking a cigarette; Jim was smiling and laughing through the stories, but I noticed a quiver in his lip and water in his swollen eyes. Sam said, "Do you remember that night we landed in Sicily?" and Jim said yeah, and suddenly told a short story of his own: Yeah, Jim said, he remembered carrying so much goddamn stuff on his back, he sank like a rock; the water was too deep where the boat dropped him, over his head; and he jumped from the boat and sank in over his head right to the sandy bottom; and he felt a hand grab him and pull him up; and it was a big Scottish sergeant who pulled him from the water and said in a big voice, "Come on, Canada, you can do it!!!" And Jim laughed at his story, and Sam and I both laughed, and Jim

stubbed his cigarette and wiped his eyes with one hand.

Sam said to Jim, for maybe the fifth time, that "it's easier to remember the good times"; and then he said we should be going. Jim stood in his bright doorway and thanked us for visiting. Sam stopped to urinate in the snow-laden trees beside the car, raising a bit of steam, and I looked up at the stars and the drifts of smoke from Jim's chimney. When we were backing out in the car, I saw Jim still watching us from his small kitchen window, a bright puffy face surrounded by the darkness outside. Back on the dirt road crossing the train tracks, Sam said to me, "Well I'm sorry, that wasn't very useful. Jim couldn't remember much." I said no, no it was useful, it was good to meet Jim, and interesting to hear the stories. Sam said, "The problem is, Jim drank a lot after the war, and it affected his memory. He was a sniper in the war, so he saw a lot of action. But he's lost his memory from drinking."

And Sam continued talking about his methods for remembering ("See, I never drank. This is how I can remember in such good detail") and he got into telling me some new stories (and repeating some old ones already told) as we got back onto the highway and on our way to the restaurant. But I was thinking to myself, as I got out my recorder to tape our conversation; I was thinking that Jim's problem with memory was not really that he had lost it.

### **Working on Souvenirs**

Sam interpreted Jim's reluctance to tell stories as if it was an incapacity, as if Jim simply could not recall. Remembering was so important to Sam that perhaps he could not imagine anyone not wanting to do it. Did it not occur to him that memories are sometimes avoided, that stories sometimes aren't told, not because they are unavailable but because they are painful? Surely Sam

would understand this if it were put to him directly; but perhaps it was not something he could relate to in his own experience. Sam remembered so much, with much enthusiasm, but with little apparent feeling. He had a more intellectual sort of relationship to his war experiences, treating them as facts or details that needed to be preserved, collected, organized – rather like his wife's collection of souvenir teaspoons from all over the world that literally covered two walls of their living room, from floor to ceiling. During my visit, in his wife's absence, Sam brought out boxes of his own souvenirs, as he called them, and for three days we "worked" on them, sitting on the living room sofa, removing papers and photographs and medals and books from the boxes and examining them on the coffee table.

I was going to learn that Sam's intellectualizing was a means of distancing himself from a painful crisis of his personal identity and integrity. Sam's way of remembering was characteristic of a particular response to trauma whereby traumatized individuals review their experience as an intellectual problem, approaching it as a curiosity that has apparently no emotional significance or effect on them (BenEzer 1999; Hollway and Jefferson 2008:305; Vaillant 1992:246-7).<sup>1</sup> While Sam displayed little affect, his obsessional review of a singular, problematic, shockingly violent event suggested that he remained profoundly affected and wounded. The one occasion when Sam was to express strong emotion in his voice was when he imitated the murderous voice of his sergeant, a sergeant who was also coincidentally named Sam. Meanwhile, Sam shared some sense of identity with his German enemies. Sam's parents had immigrated to rural Alberta from Germany before Sam was born; Sam had grown up in a German-Canadian community and could

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1 Vaillant defines intellectualization as "thinking about instinctual wishes in formal, bland terms that leaves the associated affect unconscious.... Intellectualization includes paying undue attention to the inanimate in order to avoid intimacy with people, or paying attention to external reality to avoid recognition of inner feelings, or paying attention to irrelevant detail to avoid perceiving the whole" (1992:246-7).

speaking the language well enough that during the war he could interview his German prisoners (and sometimes torment them). I believe that what was wounded or painfully unresolved in Sam was his sense of personal identity. This was not a problem of cultural coherence, however; rather, it was a struggle to find a sense of moral coherence. Sam's efforts at remembering are consistent with Linde's (1993) point that "people do not want just any objectifiable self; they want a good self, and a self that is perceived as good by others" (123). Recall that Sam had described the sniper Norman Letendre to me as "a good guy".

He was considered a good man, well, like he

**What did that mean, that he was a good man?**

Well, well he, he killed them Germans, he was killing Germans, and

**Yeah**

and he was a good guy.

**Yeah.**

Yeah. He, he was doing his job.

The moral certainty that Sam applied to Letendre was lacking with respect to himself. His uncertainty was evident in his repeated efforts to organize and narrate his own experiences. Sam was painfully uncertain about the goodness of his own participation in "killing them Germans". The personal significance of his uncertainty – the moral question, "Am I a good man?" – was hidden inside his intellectual-style pursuit of the facts of his experience. Years after my interviews with Sam, I noticed that the question had nevertheless been raised, surreptitiously, in the symbolism or personal meanings that Sam had attached to soldiers' boots.

So, during my three-day visit, Sam brought out his boxes of what he called his "souvenirs" and we worked on them when we were not out driving to the restaurant. Among the souvenirs was a small red book, *In Memoriam*, that contained the names of all the WWII dead from Sam's regiment, listed in chronological order with the dates and locations of their deaths. When I remarked, "It's quite something that you can just kind of flip through the list and you see all these names," Sam took this as a utilitarian rather than emotional observation, as he answered: "Yeah, well, see, this is why I can remember so easy. Because I know the dates. If I want to check anything I just check the date of when one of the guys was killed, eh? Yeah. And uh, it gives me uh, terrific information."

He was not passionless. His stories were vivid, expressing his sense of wonder and beauty in small, even violent things.

### **A moaning minnie, what's that?**

Well that was uh, what they, called them a Wienenwerfel, it was a five barrel mortar, a big one, it had shells that were about that big and, about that long. And when they fired up, you'd hear, roo-roo-roo! And uh, they, they threw them, eh, and, if you happened to be anywhere near. And uh, they'd land, they'd explode, they'd uh, uncurl, a lot, the metal would uncurl like a, uh, a dandelion, eh? You know how a dandelion

### **Yeah?**

Push your finger on a dandelion, how it curls down?

[....]

We went up a little further, and I come and, there was a bank here, and open ground here, and uh, like these guys were in there like swallows in these holes that were dug in, and uh, I think it was C company that was there...

[....]

Oh yeah, here was where, 20th of October, was when that guy, I was telling you, the most highly trained officer in the Canadian army, and he wouldn't listen to us how to get out, and uh. He started showin us fieldcraft and he got his head blown off, with one of them fast firing German machine guns. Captain Taylor. We uh, took him out to an Italian cemetery to bury him. And uh, when we were diggin down, we didn't go down so far and we hit bones. So we dug the bones out, went down a little further and there was more bones. We threw them out, so then we thought we'd better lay him to rest in there. But he didn't stay there long, I guess they took him out and he was put in the, he was put in the uh, yeah he's in the cemetery at Agira, in Italy. Yeah. Where they put a Canadian cemetery up on this mountain. I went there once, uh, when I went back.

Sam had gone back to find the grave of Captain Taylor; he was not indifferent to the dead; he just appeared, in his storytelling, to be untroubled by the physical details that he remembered so well: the violence, the wounds, the bones and beheadings. When he was affected by something, he would describe it as "strange". One of his more common remarks was, "it was the strangest thing..." and he would say it like he was holding an extra piece of a puzzle he thought had been finished.

### **The Battle at the White House**

But there was something that Sam experienced as unfinished; something he was trying to piece together; a piece was missing but he didn't know the shape of it or the space it needed to fill – from "one particular day". He had many pages of notes about it in his box.

### **What's all that?**

It's uh, the stories. Oh, I got this book *A City Goes To War* and I'll sh, I'll uh cross reference it with uh, with what happened that one particular day.

**And what are those notes that you wrote there?**

Ah just some notations with regard to that.

**Just something you wrote out for yourself?**

Yeah.

He was working on his memory of a small battle – a skirmish, really, but Sam called it a battle – at a white house on a hill in southern Italy. He had got a book, a history of the Edmonton regiment in World War Two (Stevens 1964), to help him with that day.<sup>2</sup> All weekend of my visit, through the stream of so many stories, he kept returning to this one, of that one particular day, telling it slightly differently with some different details every time, so that it often took me a while to realize that we were back at this story again: of the white house; Sergeant Hatley's aggression; the death of Frew; and the killing of four Germans, with a fifth taken prisoner. Those were the details that remained constant. One of the paths that led into this story was the reading of that little red book, *In Memoriam*. When the book came out of the box, Sam wanted to read me all the names.

But uh, this book gives uh, all the guys, from the time uh, we went on, eh? Ok... Here's the Sicilian Campaign. Robinson, Rasmussen, Brimacombe. They got killed on the 14th of July. That was about the first time we ever met the Germans. And then Piazza Amerina. Munro, McLeod, Masters, Huff, Buxton. Yeah, Buxton, uh, we went ahead, and we picked him up, and he had his jaw shot off, eh? He died of wounds after we got there. Hell of a nice guy. [...]

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<sup>2</sup> I do not think this book can have been much help to Sam in his search for more information about this day. See the note on official sources later in this chapter, in the section "Conflicting Stories, Corroborating Boots".

And here's uh, Leonforte. The guys who were killed, killed there. Gill, Atkinson, Baxter, Harris, Smith, Cameron, Blaylock. Some of these I don't know. Bryant. I knew Bryant really well. Agira. That was in the cemetery there. Major Bury, got killed, and Private Davison, and Pat O'Coffey. Pat come from Fort McMurray, and uh, his dad owned the hotel up there. And then, this is the Salsio River, when we crossed that. Hill 736. Bud Craney. He got uh, hit, and, you know he was an awful brave guy and he, he says I know I'm dying he says, I can smell myself. Never forget that. You know. Could smell himself. Sergeant Hammell. He got killed. Walker. McEwan, Sergeant McEwan. Yeah, he come from Barrhead. Uh, Wabisca. He was a Métis, he was in our outfit. Lieutenant Pratley. He died of wounds at Debolt. Italian Campaign. Lieutenant Donald. Oh, here was where we had that battle. Frew. Where, we uh, we went on a, like we went on a, a patrol ahead of the regiment

**Yeah?**

To try and contact the enemy. We weren't supposed to, uh, engage in any shooting or anything but just, scout and find out. But we had a, a couple of pioneers with us to lift mines off the roads or anything. And we come ahead to this, uh, town. And we got in there and, when they started to come, and the Yugoslav come up to me and he was telling me like, just on the other end of town, there was uh, German soldiers in a house. So uh

**What was he doing there? Yugoslav?**

Oh, Yugoslav? I guess, uh, he was in Italy, hidin out or something.

**He wasn't in uniform, was he?**

No no. He was just a civilian.

**Ok.**

But anyway uh, the, Sam Hately [Sam's sergeant] right away said well let's, let's go out and get em, you know? First thing he wanted to god damn fight. So we went through the town past, up on the hill, and uh. Well this guy come with us, he pointed the house out, he says they're in there, so we crept forward, and the only cover there was, was that ditch up on one side, and where I was, where the well was. And I got behind the well. But when they shot, the bullets were bouncing off that god damn well. But I was layin low and just, on the edge, and I had the Bren gun<sup>3</sup> around the corner, eh? And I remember Hately here and

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3 A Bren gun was a light machine gun used by British and Commonwealth troops in WWII. Fitted with a bipod, it was suitable for shooting from a prone position.

someone here. And then the shootin started, well we

**When did you start shooting?**

Right away. Right into the building.

**Soon as you got there.**

Well soon as uh, we heard them shoot, we started shootin into the building.

**Oh yeah.**

Cause they must have shot here, and that's when they got Frie, uh, Frew, and they got, uh, Gis, Giesbrecht through the lung, eh? But uh, we had peppered in there. And then they, come out of the house, and they had white shirts on. And they were runnin across this field. Well can you imagine what kind of a target they made?

**Hm.**

I know uh, Hately and I were both firing, I wouldn't say who got him but, one guy I'll bet he jumped as high as this ceiling. Screaming, eh?

**When he got hit.**

He went down, yeah. Others fell. They, they were killed. But the sergeant then, I forget, Gus Campbell. Yeah, Gus was here. He went in, and he brought this guy out, and then that's when he asked him uh, me, what, what do you think, what, what are, what are we going to do with him? And I says well we give him a chance to run down the road. And uh

**Run down the road?**

Yeah. And when I asked him, he couldn't run, and he showed where he'd been shot through the leg in, on the Russian front. He said, "ich kann nicht laufen", I can't run. Well then, that's when we put him in jail. But otherwise. He had the chance to run, but he didn't take it. We used to give quite a few of them the chance. But it was, when you think of it, it's cruel, isn't it? The guy had no chance, really, when it come down to it.

What Sam meant by giving the prisoner "the chance to run" was that once he was running, the Canadians would shoot him. After all, a man who is running away is no longer your prisoner.

That was one telling of the story. We got to talking about how Sam had learned German from his immigrant parents, and other encounters he had with German prisoners during the war. Perhaps he was given frequent guard duty because he knew the language; or perhaps he volunteered for it, because he enjoyed watching and eavesdropping on the Germans who didn't know that he could understand them.

Like uh, where I was telling you where we had this uh, these paratroopers in these crypts? This uh

**What was that again?**

We had these paratroopers as prisoners, laying in the crypts where we took the coffins out?

**Oh yeah.**

Yeah, we took the, pulled the coffins out and had the prisoners in

**Where was, where was that?**

That was up uh, near Cattolica.

**Yeah**

But uh, there was one German was standing up and, he was a big bugger, eh? And this [Canadian] officer come along, that I knew well, and, we'd given the German a cigarette and he was smoking, and the officer looked at that and he said, "Get that cigarette out." And went up to him and he took it out of his mouth and twisted it. And the officer was small and this guy was a big bugger

**Yeah**

he was looking! I'll, I'll never forget that! Uh. Yeah, that was the same, same spot, the one was there, and uh, he didn't know I could speak German or anything, and, he, he made a remark, if he could get hold of that rifle, they could get away or something like that. And uh, yeah I had my rifle, I went fooling around then with it. Like that, and right close to the guy, and you know he was looking like this. And uh, so finally uh, I told him. I says, "Warum greifen sie das nicht?" Well you should have seen him, he just hurr! He knew

he was set up, eh?

**Oh.**

Yeah. I told him, "Why don't you grab it?" Well he knew better than to grab it.

Then we came to another paper in Sam's box, a sheet of blue graph paper on which he had written the title, "Rough Map of Recollection of October 3, 1943." This was the battle at the white house again. Sam had sketched a map of the battle on the graph paper. He had drawn the walls of the house, the ditch, the well in the yard; he had drawn X's to mark the spots of the Canadian soldiers, with their names written in, including himself. X's also marked the spots of the Germans where they had fallen, shot dead, in the field to the left of the house. Dotted lines traced the lines of fire between Germans and Canadians, and differently dotted lines traced the path of the Germans' flight from the house to where they fell.

### **'For What?'**

Sam was excited to see the map and describe it to me. "Oh here was where, yeah that one place where we captured that one German, this is where, the ditch, and I, where Frew was killed."

While Sam showed me the map, I made some attempts to ask him what was motivating his efforts to organize this memory, with so much notetaking, book reading, and map-making.

Sam Hatley was here. I was here with the Bren gun. And there was someone here, firing that way. And when these guys were running out this way, uh, that's when we were nailing them, eh? And that's where, "house Jerries<sup>4</sup> were in",

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4 Among British and Commonwealth soldiers and civilians during WWII, "Jerry" and "Jerries" were nicknames for German soldiers. More hostile terms for Germans were "Krauts" and "Huns".

well we captured that one there.

**Who did, when did, why did you write this?**

Well I, I had this story on it, eh? Yeah. It happened in. "Rough map of recollection, recollection of October the third, 1943." Yeah that's when we must have uh, had that battle with them guys. Cause see in October, the weather's nice there yet. Cause the weather was good.

**Yeah?**

When we were there. Yeah, I haven't published this yet, but Gus Campbell wants me to publish it, and I think I will.

**So when, why did you write this down?**

Well I, I sent it to uh, this friend of mine, that got shot through the lung here where Frew was killed. Frew, and Henry, like, and Gus, Gus Campbell. See them three were there, well, Frew got killed, he got shot through the lung, and I wanted to know if I was, I couldn't figure out what these guys were doing over there and how that happened. He was killed without us even knowing it, eh? But you know the way the firing were, we were firing from here but I don't think they were really firing from that angle.

**Yeah?**

Because I was right behind the well here.

**Yeah.**

Yeah. But I, I mean, once we started bouncing the bullets into that house, I guess they got outa there pretty fast cause uh, we put a lot of rounds in through the windows, through the doors.

I never got a clear answer from Sam, but at first it seemed that the problem he wanted to solve was how Frew was killed. The way that Sam describes it, Frew's death was not witnessed by anyone; they only found him dead when the battle was over. "He was killed without us even knowing it, eh?" And Sam was puzzled as to how the Germans could have shot him. This seemed to be the purpose of the map: to determine the lines of fire. "I don't think they were really firing

from that angle." And then there is this suggestive, unfinished thought in Sam's narrative, a significant false start and correction (see Ewing 2006) that I only noticed years later when I was transcribing my tapes: "And I wanted to know if I was, I couldn't figure out what these guys were doing..." Sam wanted to know if he was, what, exactly? I wonder if he was worried, and wanted to know, if he had been the one who shot Frew by mistake – a case of friendly fire – when he was shooting from behind the well at the Germans as they ran.

From my own recollection of Sam's map (and assuming the map was accurate) the angle did not seem right for that, either: Frew's trench was to the right; the Germans fled from the house in the opposite direction, towards the left. And of course, I am only guessing what Sam was thinking when he said, "I wanted to know if I was..." Sam's thought remained unfinished.

What he did make clear to me, later, was that he had wondered if it was right to kill the Germans. He had also wondered if the Canadians should have killed the fifth German rather than take him prisoner. These thoughts came up on another occasion during that three day visit, when we were sitting on the sofa with the souvenirs all around us and more of Sam's notes on the battle came out of the box.

About five years ago, I started writing this up. You know?

**Yeah.**

But you'll see, by reading them two, it's uh. You can ask any questions on that. Then I can answer them. I'll want to publish that one, cause uh, Gus Campbell would like to see it printed, cause Gus's name is mentioned there, he was the one who was laying in that ditch where Frew was killed, eh? And uh, they must have been all right close together in the, and the German that got him must have been a terrific sharpshooter. But maybe they stuck their heads up a little too high, even though they were in a ditch. Well that's why, actually, I'm glad we got them. And uh

**Got who?**

Got them uh, Germans, that were running out of the house.

**Yeah?**

Cause one of them killed Frew. And killed, and shot Giesbrecht up. You know. And who knows. I'd hate to think it was that guy we let get away.

**Oh the guy with the penny?**

Yeah with the bullet in the leg that was shot on the Russian front.

**Oh, I think I'm mixing up the stories.**

Yeah. No, he was in the house. The other Germans run out, this one guy stayed in the house, we took him prisoner.

Notice that Sam said, "actually". "Actually" he was glad they killed the Germans.

"Actually" – as if he was responding to an opposing idea, or an unspoken question to himself: are you glad you killed the Germans? Was it right? The idea that the whole battle was unnecessary was implied in Sam's complaint against his sergeant, Sam Hatley (in a passage quoted earlier): "We went on a patrol... We weren't supposed to engage in any shooting or anything... But anyway uh, the, Sam Hatley right away said well let's, let's go out and get em, you know? First thing he wanted to god damn fight." The sergeant led them out of their way to attack the Germans in the white house. The Germans were running away. Was it right to kill them?

"Actually, I'm glad we got them," Sam said, I think in answer to that question. "Cause one of them killed Frew." He was trying to find a way to use Frew's death to justify the killing. But this logic of justice created another problem, because Sam didn't know which German it was who killed Frew (or even if it was a German at all). What if it was the only German that they didn't kill, the one who surrendered, who was taken prisoner even though they asked him to run? "I'd

hate to think it was that guy we let get away." Sam's effort to justify the killing leads him to question his own compassion, in sparing the German prisoner because of his wounded leg that meant that he couldn't run. "He said, 'Ich kann nicht laufen,' I can't run." Furthermore, Sam's feeling that it was cruel to shoot a prisoner who was running away – "When you think of it, it's cruel, isn't it? The guy had no chance, really, when it come down to it" – might apply just as well to the Germans who were shot and killed as they tried to run away from the house. In Sam's narrative of the battle that I quoted earlier, he suggested that those men had no chance, either. Recall this passage, when Sam remarked:

And then they, come out of the house, and they had white shirts on. And they were runnin across this field. Well can you imagine what kind of a target they made?

**Hm.**

I know uh, Hately and I were both firing, I wouldn't say who got him but, one guy I'll bet he jumped as high as this ceiling. Screaming, eh?

Easy targets, white shirts running across a brown October field; and when they were hit, flying screaming into the air. Sam never expressed any feeling; he just asked me to imagine. On a few other occasions when he returned to this story, I tried to understand why it was so important to him, why it was worth so much effort to figure out.

**And what made you write this up?**

Well I, just to remember that and uh, with Frew getting killed and uh, uh, and with Hately being there and uh, it was an action. And like uh, as I said next day was uh, when White and uh. Ernie, White, and the other guy, three of us went downtown. And that's when the officer told me, make sure you take your

weapon, so I never took my weapon, and uh, that's when uh, we were in the barber shop and...

And so began another story. I tried on another occasion:

**When did you sit down to write up this, this thing?**

Quite a while ago. Yeah.

**What, what made you do that? Like what inspired you to**

Oh I was just

**to write it out?**

I was just remembering this uh, episode, cause uh. Being able to get away again, and live. And then uh, losing Frew, and uh, Giesbrecht, knowing Giesbrecht really well, and Gus Campbell. Good friend. And then uh, like being with Hately again, you see again, out on a god damn patrol with Hately. You, you didn't. No, no life insurance company would issue life insurance if a guy was with Sam Hately.

Sam was most emotional when he talked about his sergeant, Hately. "Right away he wanted to god damn fight." "Out on a god damn patrol with Hately." One might think that Sam's anger with the sergeant was due to the fact that the sergeant had provoked a battle that had risked Sam's life and caused the death of Frew. Surely this was one source of anger. But there was also this:

**And this is Sam Hately the guy that was**

Yeah that was the guy I was telling you about, that uh, one of them Germans was laying here that shot through the belly and, and, uh. And Hately says, "Well he don't need no fucking doctor." Jesus Christ.

Sam spoke the words of his sergeant in a harsh angry manner, and then, with a pained look on his face, he swore. He looked down at the blue graph paper, his sketch of the battle that was in his hands again. In a quieter, subdued voice, staring at the graph paper, he continued:

So, actually that was over with. But next day we went out there and uh took a look again. The bodies were still there and the Italians had uh, drove the pigs out there, and the pigs were eatin them.

**Oh my god.**

Yeah. Oh I'll tell ya. Well of course the boots was gone, the Italians had all that, they were, real thieves. No uh, it's a horrible thing sometime, when you look at it, and, it's not nice. At all.

Pigs eating the bootless bodies. The killing was harsh: white shirts, jumping, screaming; the sergeant cursing the mortally wounded German, "don't need no fucking doctor"; and finally the horrible sight of the bodies the next day. This, I think, is what Sam was trying to rationalize, to justify, through his work on the story. I wonder if his work at organizing, mapping, searching for references in books, was also an effort to busy himself with a troubling memory in a manner that did not require him to feel too much; transforming his problem into research so that it could be less emotional; as if what he needed in order to close the story was more facts.

### **Conflicting Stories, Corroborating Boots**

The incredible thing is that, for all of Sam's work on the story, he seemed unfamiliar with the version of his friend Gus, which was so divergent from his own. Sam had Gus marked on his map, and told me that Gus was there. Yet when I interviewed Gus, the story took such a different

form that I did not recognize it as having anything to do with Sam's story at the time. It was just one of many stories that Gus and his friends told me on that occasion. I met Gus together with three of his friends, Rolly, Jack, and Bill.<sup>5</sup> The four veterans gathered to meet me one evening at Gus' suburban home, where we were served coffee and cookies by Gus' granddaughter before we were left alone in the living room to talk about the war. The four friends had a weekly routine of getting together, and there was a lot of banter between them. At one point, they told this story, together; much later, when I was transcribing my tapes, I noticed that this was a story about their sergeant, Hately, going up a hill to attack some Germans; but in this story, the other men stayed behind and went into town where they confronted five Germans in a different house. And in this story, no Canadian died, and no Germans were killed; all five Germans were taken prisoner, including one from the Russian front whom they remember talking to Sam. Here is the transcript of all four friends telling the story:

That was, we were on a patrol, this was way before Ortona, it was at uh... Colle d'Anchisi. We'd been sent on a static patrol out about three miles to a little village called Guardiaregia. [...] We got up in there and uh, there was a white house up on the hill... white house up on the hill and Sam [Hately] says that's an observation post, mark my words. He says come on guys, let's go up and take em out. So one guy says yeah I'll go with you, when, if you can get anybody to volunteer then they'll, if Jones is goin I'm goin,

Yeah, we all went.

He went, and I went

Sam Lenko

Sam and, anyhow, we tried to go around the back... there was a great big crevasse there, and we couldn't get across it. [...] Anyhow, we got as far as, oh about half a mile of the place, and here's another great big ravine so Sam

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5 This was the same occasion when they told me about Indian snipers and real killers (see Chapter 6).

[Hately] says well I'm not going to get across there with you guys so what did?

Sandford. Norm Sandford.

Normie Sandford volunteered to go with him. So he told me to take the rest of the guys down to Campochiaro and wait for him. We get to Campochiaro and here's one of our scouts and he told us he'd been talkin' to a wop and there was four Germans in the town looting the town, would we come and chase them out. So we had about nine men left, sure we could go and chase them out sure we'll go and chase them out. So remember I think you were right in front of me

Yeah, you and I were right together there! [laughing]

And anyhow we're sneaking along the ditch and out of the window comes a potato masher.<sup>6</sup> Just the one, just the one. And it didn't get a damn one of us

Well we rolled into the ditch there, yeah

So, I told DeLorme to smarten them up there with that Bren gun. So we started shooting into the house there with this Bren gun and pretty soon this white flag come out.

And they all come out.

And we come in the, but the thing about it was, there wasn't four Germans,

There was more than that!

there was five Germans, and he went and got help, and, I tell you

We just got out in time!

We just got out in time.

I remember Sam Len, Sam, he could speak pretty good German there, and he had, we had those guys carryin the heavy equipment

Yeah!

One guy said he was wounded in Russia, so, Lenko was just a talking to him in German, telling him

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<sup>6</sup> "Potato masher" is a nickname for a German hand grenade, so called because of its long handle. One is on display at the Canadian War Museum's Ortona diorama (pictured in Figure 24).

Well who went back with, did you come back with me to take them to company headquarters?

No.

Well we got back, I know I took them back, just four of them you know but they weren't armed

Yeah, yeah

But I was sure somebody else came with me.

Well I went, I went back with those two pilots that came walking in.

Oh yeah. But anyhow we fed these guys. And I heard somehow that one of these guys could sing Lili Marleen<sup>7</sup> in English. I said, "Before you get any supper, you sing us Lili Marleen." And he could sing like a lark!

Oh yeah!

He'd been wounded in Russia.

They were Desert Air Force, weren't they?

In this story, they killed no one, and no Canadian died, and they said that Sam was there.

So was Sam mistaken? Was he trying to find meaning in events that never happened? Sam certainly believed that his memories were real enough that he had been working on them for years. Perhaps during that work, in his effort to find missing pieces in historical references and other people's stories, he had constructed an inaccurate assemblage of various details that really belonged to other times and places. Or, perhaps, his friends were mistaken.<sup>8</sup> There was no

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7 Lili Marleen is a German love song based on a poem by WWI conscript Hans Leip. The lyrics are addressed to the soldier's girlfriend (Lili Marleen) recalling how they used to meet under a lamplight. The song was broadcast frequently on German army radio and became popular with Canadians and other soldiers of the Eighth Army who invented their own lyrics to the tune. Mel recalled listening to German prisoners singing it in unison: "And, we're goin along in trucks, and here's, two, three thousand POWs, marching along singing Lili Marleen and that just made the, the hair stand on the back of your neck you know... beautiful."

8 It is hard to corroborate either of the stories from official sources. The War Diary of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment for October 3, 1943 reports that during a reconnaissance patrol "the enemy consisting of 12 All Ranks,

mistaking Sam's rare expression of revulsion and dismay as he recalled witnessing the white shirts screaming, the harsh words of his sergeant, and the terrible scene of the dead bodies. There was also no mistaking Sam's feeling of responsibility for what he had (or believed he had) witnessed; that he felt the need to explain it, and provide a just accounting of who had killed, and who had died. According to his friends, Sam had never killed anyone. Sam was clearly not convinced. Disturbed by his sergeant's violence, he also felt complicit ("Hatelly and I were both firing, I wouldn't say who got him"); disturbed, yet by his own account, he had almost been as cruel as his sergeant, in his original intent to kill the prisoner.

Sam may have mixed up some of the details of his stories, and some may even be falsely remembered; but the detail of the bootless German bodies is supported by this story that I found in an old issue of the regimental journal, as told by the regimental padre. The story is about Sam's sergeant, Hatelly. (The story refers to the sergeant by his first name, Sam, but for the sake of clarity I have substituted the sergeant's last name):

I think it was at Vinchiatturo I first saw that redoubtable soldier, Sgt Sam Hatelly. He was in action with his pal Cpl Channel, plus some other fierce battle competitors. We were situated on a hill overlooking a large plain and valley and we could therefore see all the action clearly. There was a well placed farmhouse and we saw that it had two armoured vehicles near it as well as some dozen Germans going in and out of the house. [Hatelly] took out a group to 'clean up' this nest of snipers and machine gunners. We couldn't follow too well the

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likely to be a German Demolition Party, were engaged in a cemetery near their present area at 1430hrs yesterday. One of the enemy was killed, 2 were wounded and a Sgt was taken prisoner. This engagement unfortunately cost the Regt M16639 Cpl Frew, J.M., killed, and M65392 Pte Giesbrecht, H., wounded." The same details are provided in *A City Goes to War*, with no additional information (Stevens 1964:256). The Official History reports that two days later (October 5) the Edmontons suffered no casualties while taking German prisoners during a raid in Baselice (Nicholson 1956:240). Regarding Guardiaregia, the Official History reports that it was "taken without resistance on 18 October" (Nicholson 1956:257). However, according to Stevens (1964), there must have been combat in Guardiaregia in which some Germans were killed: "On October 21st the Edmonton detachment at Guardiaregia was relieved. In its only contact with the enemy it had accounted for 13 Germans, of whom 6 were taken prisoner" (260).

progress of the group as they crawled on their stomachs as near as they could to the farmhouse but we heard the gunfire and saw one of the vehicles drive away while the other vehicle remained stationary. Presently we could see [Hately]'s group checking the house and it was assumed that the crew of the vehicle that remained behind had been eliminated. We could then see our bunch of men returning to their base and in the distance the vehicle that had previously taken off was seen to be edging its way back. The next thing we knew all of a sudden [Hately]'s bunch sat down, except for [Hately] that is. He hurried back to the house and we who were watching were a bit disturbed since we could see in the distance the German vehicle on its way back. However, [Hately] was soon back with his crew with something under his arm. When they had all returned to our base we questioned [Hately] as to why he had gone back to the house. He at once brought out a lovely pair of long boots, brown ones, that he had 'liberated' from a German officer who it is assumed was no longer in need of them. This was only one of [Hately]'s many escapades (Bailey 1982:57).

The padre tells the tale with an approving, almost jovial tone – it was an "escapade". What a contrast to Sam's words expressing shock and disgust at the killing and the fate of the bodies; and Sam had not even considered that the boot thief might have been his own "no fucking doctor" sergeant.

Indeed, I wonder if the boots are the key to Sam's story; which brings us back to that night in the car, when Sam and I were leaving Jim's place, back on the road to the restaurant.

### **The Bootless Enemy**

I got my tape recorder out while Sam explained how he had preserved his war memories whereas Jim's had been destroyed by alcohol. On my recording, you can hear the roar of a passing logging truck, the swish of Sam's windshield wipers, then a period of quiet wordlessness, just the hum of the car engine. And then Sam said: "Jim was mentioning about us, uh, landing in Sicily." There was a brief silence; then I said, "Yeah." Sam was quieter now. At Jim's house he had engaged Jim

in banter, telling funny stories, trying to lift Jim's spirits and help the conversation. Now, in the dark car, he seemed to recede in contemplation. His eyes watched the lines of the road ahead while he spoke to me in a slower, more distant voice:

Cause uh. That day a storm come up before we land, we went around Malta I think about two or three times, eh? And, Jesus. Like on the ship we were on, the Empress of uh. No, no, it was a, a Union of South African liner, the Durban Castle, that we went to Sicily on. And uh. No we got in the Mediterranean there, and that storm come up. And we uh, like, the bow of the ship down in the water, when it was clear, was about thirty feet, eh? And the waves were washing over the bow, eh? When we were getting ready to kinda land. But that night, I think it was about one o'clock in the morning, we had to go on the side of the ship and uh, jump in the landing craft tanks, eh? And uh, the water was just swirling. The barge would come right up near the door, and then you jump. And then it would go way down. And uh, I didn't get the first jump. And I looked the black water just swirling down below there, oh my god. But the second time it come up, I jumped. I landed way out in there. And I had a rifle, ammunition on me and, you know. Pack loaded. Uh, but we finally got near the shore and it was just starting to break. Daylight a little bit. Dusk yet. So, I uh, and you just get out of the water and the water's pouring off you, you know? Uh, you're uh. And it's hard to move, you've got all that weight. And then you're getting on round rocks, and uh, we had uh, well good heavy boots on, with cleats, and steel. Corks. And uh, try and run on them rocks, and, you know it just seems, like we had to run maybe, two hundred feet to get up to the tree line. And uh, it just seemed to be one of the longest miles I've ever run in my life.

**Were you nervous?**

Well, no, I had my rifle ready and everything. And, and I come into the bush, and this was the odd part. There was an Italian standing there, and I come up on him with the rifle, and I was flabbergasted what I seen. He uh, had a torn jacket, green, torn pants, no helmet, but he had a rifle taller than himself, it was one of these, I guess they brought it back from the Abyssinian war. And there, the guy was on the beach. And I looked down, and the god damn, he had no boots on.

**Oh god!**

Yeah. And uh, you know, uh, if he'd have been well dressed, I'd have killed him. But uh, uh, I was stunned, when I seen this. I thought my god, is this what we're going to fight? You know. And the sergeant, that sergeant, Sergeant Hatley, run up beside me, and I had the rifle on the guy and the guy of course threw his

hands, and his rifle flew way over, eh?

**Yeah.**

And the sergeant come up running, he says shoot him, shoot him, shoot him. And I says, but he's got no shoes on. That made a difference, I wouldn't shoot him because he had no shoes on.

**That's funny.**

Well, Jesus. You know when you think of it afterwards, such a thing, that kind of a thought enter your mind, so fast, eh? That he had no boots on. But uh, then uh, I told the sergeant, well uh, you shoot him. And he says, no, he says, what in the hell are we going to do with him? And I says well, let him go back to where the ships were. You know. And, that's the last I seen of that guy. Then we went forward.

Sam was quiet for a moment. Then he added:

Poor bloody Italian, he was an old man, standing there. Jesus. But you know, I had the rifle cocked, safety off, ready, and, and, it would have been, if he'd have had good clothes on, and boots on, he'd have been dead. There's no two ways about it.

In this story, Sam tells of his discovery of an instinctive compassion that he hadn't known was in him. Who could have predicted that he would hesitate to kill a man with no boots? More than hesitate; he rejected his sergeant's order to shoot. Sam's narrative even foreshadowed this disarming encounter with a bootless enemy, when he described his feeling of power in his "good heavy boots... with cleats, and steel". His boots were "good" – but also "heavy" with the issue of life and death.

The story of the battle at the white house that Sam was working on so hard may have been

hopelessly confused in its details. Perhaps Sam had the dates wrong, the wrong number of Germans, perhaps some of these events happened elsewhere, not at a white house; perhaps some of them never happened at all. But something had certainly happened to Sam. I don't think he understood what it was, and in this way his confusion over the details of his story might be the symptom, not just the cause, of his deeper uncertainty or unease about his experience. Sam did not know if he had killed those Germans in the field; but he did know that he had tried to kill Germans – somewhere, sometime – and that he had at least helped to make it happen. So in all of his work to map, to organize, cross-reference and revise, he was trying to compose a story that would justify the violence – to himself. To himself only, because no one else was arguing that anything was wrong. This was a battle within Sam, with his conscience. He maintained out loud that he was glad the Germans were killed. But the fact that he had continued to work on the story, never finishing it, for years, suggests that he was not convinced. He remembered the voice of his sergeant; he cursed it; and I think he worried that he was too good at performing it, that he had acquired his sergeant's cruelty. And I wonder if the sight of the dead Germans was all the more troubling to Sam because it challenged what he thought he had learned about himself on that night on the beach in Sicily. He felt instinctively that it was wrong to kill a man with no boots; this was a sign of his compassion, his goodness; but then he saw the bodies of the German dead, whom he had killed (or at least helped to kill), and they challenged his conscience because they were bootless in the morning. I think the story that Sam was struggling to compose, through the details of the white house, was about how he became a killer, and what that meant for his conscience and his belief that he was a good man. I do not think that he ever figured out how to tell this story in a way that would let him rest. And I regret that it took me so long to guess what the "work" was about, and that I could not offer him this thought.

And reassurance? But that might have been something he could only offer to himself.

### **The Placemat**

I remember, when we got to the roast chicken restaurant, we were seated at our table, and the waitress knew Sam by name. He ordered his usual quarter chicken with fries, and I ordered the same. The waitress went away. I noticed that the paper placemats said "Welcome" with illustrations of local industry, forest, and a buck with antlers. I thought of keeping my placemat as a souvenir of my weekend with Sam.

And then I heard Sam say, "Darn it," and I saw his finger on his nose, and it was bloody. Sam's nose had started to bleed. He tried to stop it with his napkin. Blood soaked through the napkin rapidly, and he dropped it and took another one. When that napkin got too bloody, he took the whole paper placemat in front of him and crumpled it into a ball around his nose.

Finally, the bleeding started to slow. Sam tentatively removed the placemat; dabbed his nose with it; the nosebleed was coming to an end, but still there were new spots of blood staining the paper with every dab. Sam studied the crumpled ball of red-spotted paper, turning it round in his fingers in between dabs; and then he said, as if observing from far away: "Sometimes it's hard to make it stop."

## Chapter Eight: They Said He Was There

### **The Deer**

When I called Bill, I was in a casual mood.<sup>1</sup> I had decided to take a different route on my way back to Alberta from British Columbia. I felt that I had done enough interviews, and it was time to start the long drive home while the weather was still good. Somewhere in my conversations with veterans, however, I had been told the name of a man from the regiment who lived in this area where I had stopped for the night. The next morning, on a whim, I found his name in the phonebook and gave him a call. It must have been strange for him to have his morning interrupted by a stranger asking him if he had a bit of time this day to talk about the war. I expected him to say no; indeed, he did sound reluctant at first, and said he didn't remember much anyway. When he mentioned that his wife was in hospital, I said I was sorry to disturb him, wished him well; just as I was about to say goodbye, he asked me where I was and if I could come that afternoon.

Bill's directions took me down a dirt road off the highway, and then another dirt road. I remember the yellow leaves of birch trees on the mountain slopes, the green river valley, the very poor farmhouse, and the limping old sheepdog with cataracts that came to meet me at the gate where I parked my car. One of Bill's sons was outside chopping wood. He greeted me and before I could introduce myself he smiled and asked me, "Do you see them?" I looked where he was pointing across the valley and couldn't see anything. He said, "Look. See the deer?" And then I

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<sup>1</sup> The name Bill is a pseudonym.

could see a small herd of deer moving on the grassy slope of the mountain, on the edge of the forest. I said, "Oh yeah! There they are. Wow." He said, "Yeah!" Then he said, "So, what can I do for you?" and I realized he had no idea who I was; his father hadn't told him that I was coming.

### **Starting in the Middle**

Bill was wearing a coat and rubber boots inside the kitchen; he was a large, rough looking man with a shy demeanour. There was a leg of ham sitting out on the kitchen counter, and fire in the wood stove. He told me that his wife was in hospital for cancer treatment; and then he started talking right away about war, how terrible it is but everyone wants to glorify it; how his father had been a soldier in the First World War. We were still standing. I asked if we could sit and if I could use my tape recorder, and he said, "All right, Ian." I noticed that Bill used my name a lot. He had a badly bruised purple thumb, baggy eyes, and a deep rumbling voice. "Would you like some tea, Ian?" The dog came quietly into the kitchen and went to sleep by the stove. Bill brought tea to the small table, in china cups that I thought must be his wife's, and he sat and waited patiently while I set up my tape recorder.

**Uh, I just gotta get my notebook out. Yeah I know a lotta guys don't like talking about it but**

No

**it's like you said about how we don't want to glorify war**

This is it

**That's why I want to write about it in a way that doesn't make**

Ah ok, yeah, yeah

**I want to write about it in a way that doesn't make it sound like it was just an adventure, you know**

Yeah that's right

**that it was all great stuff**

Well it wasn't short enough that's for sure

**So, I'll just, I don't know how much I explained to you on the phone but uh**

Not too much

**I'll just remind you what I'm doing is my PhD research at York University in Toronto**

Oh I see, ok

**so I'm a student at the university, and I'm writing about Ortona, just, I want to interview the Canadians, and the Germans, and the Italians, so that we get to see the battle from all the different perspectives**

Yeah, yeah

**and when I write my thesis I want to use the stories of the veterans themselves, so it's not just me talking**

No, yeah

**Um, would it be ok with you if uh, when I'm writing, if, if I quote you, if some of your stories are useful?**

Yeah ok. I'm trying to think of some stories though.

**Oh, well don't worry about that!**

Uh, mmm, most of them are not too nice, Ian, that's the thing, you know.

**But, I'm interested in that too because, uh, things... like I guess maybe it's not a good thing to, to talk about, but some, some guys talk a lot about war.**

I know. Maybe some of the guys that weren't in, into it. [...] Yeah I've seen a lot of it, you know, almost three years of it. Front line soldier, you know. Yeah. I was only down the line once with pneumonia. This grenade blast just gave me a

few scratches on my left leg, you know. Um, but it did knock me cold. It was a good thing it was a German grenade because they had their uh, the outside was light tin, if it had been one of ours you know, there was a lot of heavy shrapnel to our grenades you know, yeah. The blast was terrific I guess.

We had plunged into the middle of a story with no introduction. Bill mentioned the grenade blast as if he had already told me about it (which he hadn't). Then, when I asked him about it, he made a quick remark – "I shouldn't say it" – in a manner that seemed more like he was interrupting himself, debating out loud with himself over how much to tell me.

### **How did it happen?**

Well I was running across the street. I shouldn't say it, for a better shootin. They were upstairs in the building, you know. And this guy tossed a grenade, I guess he tossed it, I don't know. Anyway I was out completely out for a while. Hm. And anyway I guess, when I come to, our guys had left, and uh, the Germans had gone too, you know. They were upstairs but somehow they got down, I guess. Our guys were trying to get em down so they, uh

### **You woke up and you were, there was nobody around?**

Nobody around no, it was quiet you know. There had been a lot of shootin, you know, and, there was still shells falling, you know, and they were shelling us and we were shelling them, you know.

The narrative was disorganized and unrehearsed, suggesting that Bill had never talked about this before – it was not part of his repertoire of life stories.<sup>2</sup> He had been reluctant to be interviewed. Then, he had greeted me right away with an emphatic point that war is terrible and should not be glorified. Having made that point at the start of the interview, he had expressed uncertainty about

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2 Linde (1993) observes that we all maintain and work on a set of personal narratives (which she calls "life stories") that we use to explain key moments in our lives to ourselves and to others. Some of these narratives may conflict but they nevertheless help us to maintain a sense of coherence and meaning.

his ability to tell me stories: "I'm trying to think of some stories though.... Most of them are not too nice, Ian, that's the thing, you know." It seems that his initial hesitation had been due to his struggle to think of stories that were "nice" enough to tell. From that hesitation, he had slipped right into a story of his being wounded by a grenade blast. It was a wound that seemed to have done no serious physical harm, but it had knocked him out and left him to wake up alone in an empty street that a short time earlier had been the scene of a frantic battle.

### **Blasted Into No-Man's-Land**

I was confused by the lack of context. In retrospect, it seems that Bill was unintentionally artful in conveying to me, through this disorganized narrative (Neimeyer 2004), the chaotic and disruptive nature of his experience. The unfolding of his narrative is somewhat reminiscent of Kirmayer's (1996) observation that "traumatic experience is not a story but a cascade of experiences, eruptions, crevasses, a sliding of tectonic plates that undergird the self" (181). Bill had not thought that he had a story to tell, but now he was recounting details in a sort of cascade in which the articulation of one remembered fragment quickly "pulled out" or prompted the recall of another. Germans were upstairs. Bill was running across the street "for a better shootin". There was something that he "shouldn't say". Bill had started with his wound, associated with his criticism of war. Much later, only when I was able to analyse the interview transcript, I realized that the missing context at this point in the story was in fact the real wound that he was not yet ready to tell.<sup>3</sup> I was going to learn that the grenade blast was the culmination of a traumatic

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3 As Neimeyer (2004) observes, when it is hard for the interviewer to follow the story, it is sometimes because "critical aspects of the plot structure of the traumatic narrative... remain hidden, unintegrated, and without social validation and support" (56). Bill's narrative disorganization and open debate with himself reminds me of Neimeyer's description of trauma narratives that are disrupted by a "ruminative struggle with radically contradictory images and emotions, as the trauma or loss can also invalidate the thematic assumptions on the

experience at the house in Ortona, an experience that had "blasted" Bill into a space of social exclusion, isolation, having lost something of his identity and stuck him with a painful memory that he was afraid to share.

Nobody around no, it was quiet you know. There had been a lot of shootin, you know, and, there was still shells falling, you know, and they were shelling us and we were shelling them, you know.

**Was it, was it dark when you woke up, was it night?**

No, it was still light. It was Christmas Day in 43, mind you.

**Christmas Day.**

Yeah Christmas Day, yeah. We didn't stop for Christmas Day.

**Really.**

No. Yeah. They pulled them out company by company to have Christmas dinner in this bombed out church, you know. Uh, the name of it escapes me but, um, and then, they went back into, uh, up front you know, as soon as they had dinner they went back. They had a bottle of beer, and roast pork, and uh, all the vegetables I forget, yeah. They scrounged all this, uh, this meat from the Italians and vegetables, and, yeah.

**But, you were, you were wounded, and you were left for dead on, on Christmas Day**

Christmas Day

**So did you make it back for the dinner that all the other guys were having?**

They said I was there but you know I don't remember it. I guess I was kinda still dazed, you know, yeah. Yeah, and uh, the postmaster, oh about 3 or 4 days after that he kept track of the guys that were wounded and killed you know, he says we sent a telegram home. What was his last name, Sinclair, Sergeant Sinclair?

**Oh yeah**

Said we sent a telegram home there that you were killed in action. He says uh we'd better send another one. They had called the roll you see. And I was there, you know. Odd, eh.

He did not remember the Christmas dinner, but they said he was there. Then, some days later, they reported him killed, but he had been there at the roll call. "Odd, eh." Notice how Bill referred to his Canadian comrades as "they" and "them" rather than "we" and "us", a use of indexicals that absented him from the group identities of his nation and regiment (see Portelli 1997c; Ewing 2006). "They pulled them out company by company.... They had a bottle of beer...."<sup>4</sup> This is the remarkable Christmas dinner that was organized by Bill's Seaforth Highlanders regiment and that has been celebrated in many accounts of the Ortona battle ever since. The regiment continues to commemorate the event with dinners at Legion halls and other community centres around Christmas time, recreating the original menu and reenacting the organ music, carols and prayers.<sup>5</sup> The dinner symbolizes and commemorates the battle not only for Bill's regiment, but now also (thanks to the 1998 reconciliation event described in Chapter 5) for

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- 4 Earlier, Bill used the first-person plural for Canadians: "they were shelling us and we were shelling them, you know." When the topic changed to Christmas, the Canadians in his discourse became third-person plural: "as soon as they had dinner they went back. They had a bottle of beer, and roast pork, and uh, all the vegetables I forget, yeah." On one hand, this may be a simple indication of Bill not remembering the dinner, either because he was never there or because he had dissociated from the experience. On the other hand, Bill was not personally involved in the shelling – he was not in a mortar or artillery unit – yet he included himself in this collective activity of violence, while absenting himself from the other collective activity of Christmas; he felt part of the "we" that shelled the Germans but not the "we" that celebrated Christmas. In his analysis of some American Vietnam veterans' narratives, Portelli (1997c) suggests that (in the specific context of those narratives) a similar pronoun shift (from "we" to "you") reflects "a traumatic change in self-perception" (164). I suggest in this chapter that a similar traumatic change in self-perception happened to Bill, either on Christmas or the next day in Ortona.
- 5 For example, "The 70th anniversary of an infamous battle – and the faithful Canadian tradition it has inspired – will be marked this Sunday (Dec. 8) at the Cloverdale Legion when more than 350 cadets recreate the Seaforth Regiment Christmas dinner" (Lang 2013). "From the table linens to the menu to the music, every effort will be made to recreate this remarkable wartime meal.... The guest of honour will be Honorary Col. David Fairweather.... 'We're very proud of the Seaforth regiment, and that's what holds us together,' said Fairweather, who'll join forces with other Seaforth soldiers who've served in Afghanistan and the Balkans, as well as hundreds of cadets just beginning their stint with the Highlanders. 'There's a camaraderie'" (Austin 2013).

Canadians in general. Bill's inability to remember it separates him from the dominant narrative of Ortona in which he was supposed to be a protagonist.

Was he actually there? The padre of the Seaforth Regiment, in his diary, noted the presence of Bill's company, C Company, and described a scene that would seem to be unforgettable:

Deathly chatter of machine guns. Rumbling of falling buildings, roar of guns (ours). Church. [...] Roses, violets. [...] "Holy night". The meal for "C" Coy. [...] I collect them for carols in Cloister (careful to make all voluntary). They cheer (?) & come & join me. Gildersleeve (Wilfred) on harmonium & I singing. Soon have about 35-40. Dinner. Medals for Indian (Webster, M.M.) & his Tommy gun. Sitting with patience waiting for Parachuteur sniper to move first. [...] Carols from Pipe Organ loft. Postie, Gowan, & other officers & men are pumpers. Cooking goes on behind high Altar, men eat in main body of Church. Piled up plates cover the altar; fruit & tins of provisions cover side altars. Carols, guns, vibration of near explosions, laughter, news of deaths. Wine, vaults, mail from home; signals bell with urgent ringing, yelling conversations over sets. Reunion of cronies. Farewell to return, as darkness begins to fall. [...] singing in Candle light by harmonium near high altar. [...] Anxious time with lights. In flickering light & shadows...<sup>6</sup>

"They said I was there." Unfortunately, I did not think to ask Bill who "they" were, exactly.

Perhaps "they" were wrong, but one way or another it is significant that Bill could not speak with any certainty about his presence at that extraordinary event; he did not remember it, but also he did not know for sure (or was unwilling to say) that he was **not** there. He explained that "I guess I was kinda still dazed" from the grenade blast. In any case, something had happened to make Bill unable to say whether he had been at that dinner or not, and then after Christmas Day he had been reported dead even though (he said) he was present at the roll call. Regardless of what had really happened, what Bill described to me was a state of alienation from his Canadian comrades, and

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<sup>6</sup> Diary of Major Roy C.H. Durnford, Chaplain (P), The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, June 1943-June 1945, p.26 (entry for 25 December 1943). Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Archives.

perhaps also a state of alienation from the truth as reported by those in authority.

### **The First Hidden Story**

It is possible that, at the time of the battle, Bill had a kind of dissociative response to a traumatic experience. Dissociation is an adaptive response to "acute stress and trauma" (Seligman and Kirmayer 2008:32) whereby individuals mentally and emotionally detach themselves (their sense of self) from what is happening around them and to them, to the point that they may be left with "gaps in awareness, memory, or identity" (Kirmayer 1994:92). Bill did not remember Christmas dinner but he did remember an event that had ruptured his identity, an experience that was so far from the conventional frame of Remembrance that it was hard for him to make the experience coherent to himself, let alone narrate it to me (see Kirmayer 1996; Neimeyer 2004; Hunt 2010:62-64). The fact that he did eventually recount it to me was probably due to his surprise (and mine as well) that I seemed to have guessed (really by accident) the story that he had been hiding, telling himself "I shouldn't say it". This came about as a result of my effort to find some bearings in the confusing landscape of memory that Bill was unfolding to me.

Said we sent a telegram home there that you were killed in action. He says uh we'd better send another one. They had called the roll you see. And I was there, you know. Odd, eh.

### **What did you think about**

Yeah it was down in my, I got my pension and it was down in my uh, uh, you know all the data on you you know. Down there. Hm.

### **Did you write to your parents to tell them**

They knew, they knew uh, sister said oh I knew you wouldn't be killed. That's

what she said when I got back.

**But how did you, see you woke up on the street, alone.**

Yeah

**Do, do you remember how you got yourself out of there?**

I guess I walked out. It was quiet, you know, there was no shootin going on. Our guys had pulled out, and the Germans had left, you know, yeah.

**And where were you wounded?**

I wasn't wounded I was just blast, you know. Yeah. I got a few scratches on my leg that's all. In fact I never even went and reported it you know.

**Just blast**

Just blast

**You mean just the blast will knock you out?**

Yeah, oh yeah it'll, you know, yeah it will. From these German grenades, they were all blast just about, you know. Yeah. If you got a direct hit it would kill you all right, or within ten or twelve feet, but it must have been, well I don't know how far I was, how would I know?

**Yeah. Right. What company were you in?**

I asked about Bill's company as a way of stepping back from the immersion in details of Bill's experience to try to locate his story in relation to the landscape of the battle as I knew it. I was also interested to know, given Bill's self-reported difficulties with memory, if he could recall some basic facts about his regimental identity and officers.

C company then.

**C company.**

Yeah

**You were, so that was the one led by um, Don Harley, I heard. Do you remember him? I think he was the captain.**

Captain Harley, yeah, that's right, yeah. I thought our company commander was wounded that day.<sup>7</sup> No, all right. What was his first name?

**Don.**

Don. Harley.

**I think his nickname was Lulu.**

Yeah. Yeah the colonel was Thomson then in Ortona wasn't it, Colonel Thomson, yeah.<sup>8</sup> We called him Fartsack Thomson.

**What did you call him?**

Fartsack Thomson, yeah.

**Fard?**

Fartsack Thomson.

**Fartsack!**

Yeah. He was good though.

**Um, there was I think in C company, I heard a story that a couple a guys got captured in a house by the Germans.**

Mm-hm. Yeah.

**Do you know that story?**

Yeah, I was one of them.

**You were one of them?**

Yeah, that's right, yeah.

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7 Captain Harley was indeed wounded on that day or the next. See Interview by Dr. R.L. McDougall with Don Harley and Clifford Wood, Toronto, June 7, 1961, p.11. Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Archives.

8 Lieutenant-Colonel Syd Thomson commanded the Seaforth Highlanders at Ortona.

**No kidding. Can you tell me about that?**

Yeah, well anyway, we were, they put us right up front, you know.

Bill started talking faster now and moving in his seat. He seemed excited to have surprised me, and I think he was equally surprised that I had heard of this story. It was not well known at all. I had never heard anyone speak of it. I am not sure why I asked Bill about it; I suppose it was on my mind because I had recently encountered a reference to it in some loose papers in the Seaforth Highlanders archives in Vancouver. This was in a room in the attic of the Seaforth Armoury that the veterans had graciously given me freedom to explore. In this cold room that was cluttered with boxes, old flags, paintings, and the taxidermied head of a stag,<sup>9</sup> I had found the journal of the padre, Roy Durnford, in which there is this small story in his recollections of the battle:

14 of our boys caught playing records of Carmen opera. Questioned by Jerry officer about Xmas day meals. About "Sherman tanks" then spoke English. Then later he and his were captured & shot. (Pity).<sup>10</sup>

It seemed to be the same story (but without Carmen and other details) that I had found in the transcript of an interview with Don Harley, the Captain of C Company at Ortona, also in a box in the Seaforth Archives. Harley recalled telling his sergeant Elashuk that "after nightfall we would not make contact with each other" and "it was absolutely essential to keep a sentry at the door of the house he was in all night".

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9 The stag is a key symbol of the Seaforth Highlanders, figuring prominently in their heraldry.

10 Diary of Major Roy C.H. Durnford, Chaplain (P), The Seaforth Highlanders of Canada, June 1943-June 1945, pp. 28-29 (entry for 7 January 1944). Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Archives.

I went forward with my runner at first light to make contact with him again, and came under terrific fire in that street and realized that the house that he had commanding that bit of area was in the hands of the Germans; and then we had one helluva scrap there, and we got them back. They were all uncaptured; they'd all been made prisoner, all that night they'd been prisoners, from about eleven o'clock on, but they hadn't been moved out...<sup>11</sup>

Harley said no more about it in the transcript. I found more detail later – after my interview with Bill – in a newspaper clipping, dated shortly after the battle, that was stored in the Edmonton City Archives. On January 11, 1944, the *Edmonton Journal* reported: "15 Canadians Captured At Ortona Are Released After Wild Scramble." The article relies on the testimony of Company Sergeant Major Elaschuk who (as Captain Harley mentioned above) was one of the Canadians taken prisoner. Elaschuk tells the reporter that the Canadians were held captive in the house with the Germans from around 6:00am until 12:30pm. There were twice as many Germans as Canadians and – an interesting detail for Elaschuk to mention – "only two loaves of bread". The Germans were very young and the officer spoke English and French. Elaschuk notes the officer "treated the Canadians well". At 12:30pm, when other Canadian forces outside were approaching their house, "The German officer took me aside and told me all the men must keep very quiet."

"Then he went upstairs and as soon as he had gone the six Germans in the room turned their weapons over to me – all but the youngest who held on to his automatic until a Jerry sergeant-major took it away from him."

Things began to happen fast. The Canadians in the street let loose everything they had and, Elaschuk said, "all you could see in the room was feet flying as the Jerry soldiers tried to get away from the firing."

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<sup>11</sup> Interview by Dr. R.L. McDougall with Don Harley and Clifford Wood, Toronto, June 7, 1961, p.10. Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Archives. Ellipsis in the original.

Elaschuk and the other Canadians started yelling and only their yells prevented them from being mortared.

Some of the prisoners and the Germans, who by this time were prisoners of the Canadians, started across the street. The Germans upstairs opened fire, killing a Canadian and wounding the German sergeant-major.

The German officer came downstairs to surrender and a German upstairs fired after him, wounding a Canadian Bren gunner. In the scramble which followed the officer was killed.

It was not very clear what happened after that for, said Elaschuk, "it was just a case of Germans and Canadians scrambling from one building to another until we reached our headquarters."

If I had not read about this event in the Seaforth Archives and then surprised Bill by mentioning it, he might never have told me that it had happened to him. The story seems to have been forgotten in accounts of Ortona since 1944. I never heard any other veteran mention it, and it is not mentioned in Zuehlke's (1999) well-researched and detailed narrative of the battle. It seems that one man who was there, Company Sergeant-Major Elaschuk, had told the story to a journalist shortly after the battle, and the regimental padre had heard it and noted it in his diary, but the story had made no lasting impression, at least not in any published documents or living witnesses that I had found. Unfortunately, I did not find the newspaper article until after my meeting with Bill, and I did not remember the details from the Seaforths Archives (the padre's diary and Captain Harley's story) at the time of our conversation; I only vaguely remembered that I had read something about Canadians being captured and rescued, and that it had some connection with C Company.

So, Bill and I were both startled. He became more animated, and now he provided some background that explained the details with which he had started his narrative. Now I learned why

there were Germans upstairs, and why Bill had been crossing the street to get a better shot when he was knocked out by the grenade blast.

And uh, we had fought for a while that day, you know. And we, they left us there, you know, they didn't bring us back. Anyway during the night the Germans closed in around us, you know? And we were more or less prisoners, you know? Well C company attacked on Christmas Day, and uh, anyway we escaped in the counter attack, the Germans all went upstairs, you know. And uh, we were down below and we got out of there. We picked up some gun, I had a, well I was packin a Bren gun and I got a hold of it you know. And uh, anyway, uh, they were shootin, I was trying to get across the street, you know, for a better shot with the Bren gun? And this is what happened then.

**That's when you got wounded.**

Yeah, yeah. Well I wouldn't say, I guess

**Well, or when you got, knocked out, yeah.**

Yeah.

**Jeez. When the Germans had you surrounded, like, did they actually come in the house, and disarm you**

They, they just closed in, uh. Corporal Deriter<sup>12</sup> was doing guard duty, oh I guess it was just before daylight in the morning, you know. And uh, we heard him talking out there, you know. And uh he says you better come out. So anyway, I, I didn't know it was Italians or what, you know I could hear jabbering out there you know. Anyway I went out and, and uh, a German shoved a Schmeisser<sup>13</sup> in my ribs, you know, and, handy ho! He says, yeah.

**Handy?**

Handy ho. It means hands up.<sup>14</sup>

**Oh I see.**

So I did of course, and I didn't know what the hell was going on you know. And

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12 Uncertain spelling.

13 A German sub-machine gun used by the paratroops. The German in the War Museum is holding one (Figure 23).

14 Bill's "handy ho" is an Anglicization of the German words, "Hände hoch" (hands up).

then they took us back, to this house and a German officer was there he was the equivalent to our lieutenant, I forget what they call them. He could speak broken English, you know.

**Really.**

Yeah, so he asked uh, a few questions. Yeah they took our paybooks and everything, you know, and. Anyway, uh, we were there for a few hours it was, it got broad daylight, and we heard shootin you know and guys hollerin you know, and the German officer says, I want you guys to keep quiet he says, your, your men are attacking you know. And uh, so they were all, they all went upstairs you know. Yeah. Anyway, uh

**They left you there?**

Oh yeah. Yeah yeah!

**What, did he trust you?**

### **The Second Hidden Story**

At this point – and I only noticed this later, when I was transcribing – Bill said a few words to himself again, saying, "oh what the hell," as if he had decided to tell me something after all, despite some feeling that he should not. It seems that he reconsidered for a moment when he said "uh, uh, no I got to think about that" – or perhaps he was struggling to organize the images that were coming back to him – before he proceeded to tell me. Inside the first hidden story (see BenEzer 1999:34) – the story about his capture by the Germans – there was another hidden story, about a killing.

Well they, no, you see, what could they do? They all went upstairs, this is it, what could they do, yeah? They figured upstairs was better anyway, you know.

And anyway uh, oh what the hell, we had a guy by the name of London<sup>15</sup> in the company, you know. And uh, uh, no I got to think about that. Um... The German officer come down with his hands up. Yeah, for some reason. And a sergeant, a German sergeant, two, they both come down, you know. And uh, this London says are there any more Germans upstairs, you know, any more upstairs? Come out of there. And a grenade come down you know. And of course London pulled the trigger and shot German officer right in the heart right dead centre you know. So he just keeled over and died. And they took the sergeant prisoner. And uh, this little guy, little German, shot one of our guys in the throat, as he come through the doorway, you know. With a Schmeisser. And anyway, Woody Taylor our first aid man is trying to, to stop the bleeding but he can't and, poor guy he died in his own blood you know

**Gee**

I know, yeah.

**The, the little German, you mean shot, shot the guy in the throat when they attacked you the first time?**

Yeah, ok, yeah, ok, yeah so anyway the little German guy had his, his uh, Schmeisser pointed right at my chest you know? And I don't know why he didn't pull the trigger. But he didn't, and anyway, corporal Plant, who was around back of me grabbed him and pulled him over. And I got the Schmeisser away from him, you know and, so they took him prisoner, too you know.

**My god. But the, the, the officer got, got shot**

He got killed

**But he was coming down the stairs with his hands up?**

He had his hands up when he come down, yeah, and London shot him. Well, London was kind of that way, you know, he, he was killed a week or so after that, anyway.

**Really.**

Yeah. He was a real German hater.

**Oh I see.**

Yeah. Hmm...

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15 Pseudonym.

There was a long silence. Bill seemed lost in thought. Bill had used a term ("German hater") that other veterans also used to describe fellow Canadian soldiers whom they regarded as excessively violent and lacking in compassion (see Chapter 6). I struggled to think of something to say. I did not feel confident enough to ask for more about London and Bill's judgement. I decided to ask about the German officer instead.

**What was, when the Germans were holding you in the house that day, the officer spoke some broken English**

Mm hm

**um, did he talk to you much? Like, he took your paybooks, but was he curious about, you know, interested in talking to you about**

Well he, he asked how many Shermans there was in town, Sherman tanks you know.<sup>16</sup> And of course we didn't know, we wouldn't tell him anyway you know. Actually cause we didn't know we weren't with the tanks, you know, we were with infantry.

**Hm... What were the Germans like?**

Treated us real good, mind you, yeah.

**Yeah**

Yeah. They gave us some of their cigarettes. And, they were terrible cigarettes, so anyway.

**Oh yeah? They weren't as good as yours.**

No...

**Do you remember what the officer looked like?**

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<sup>16</sup> This is consistent with Padre Durnford's diary entry quoted earlier: "Questioned by Jerry officer about Xmas day meals. About 'Sherman tanks' then spoke English."

Oh god no, no.

**Yeah...**

I felt bad for asking about the officer, for asking Bill to recall his face, but I had a feeling that the officer was important, and my naïve question might have prompted Bill to share what he told me next. Bill was quiet for a moment, looking at his teacup. Then he said:

Anyway somebody rifled his pockets, they usually did you know, and they found a picture of his wife and a little girl, uh...

**Oh**

I know this is what, terrible you know, yeah.

**What did, uh...**

Bill was squinting his eyes very hard as if he was trying to hurt them. I instinctively tried to move the conversation away from Bill's pain and my discomfort (see Ewing 2006; Anderson and Jack 2003) by asking a question about numbers.

**Well how many were you that were taken prisoner, how many guys with you?**

There was one section. Uh, Corporal Deriter's section, I was the Bren gunner of his section. And uh, yeah.

**So a section had like uh, five guys, or ten guys?**

No, more than, yeah seven or eight guys, yeah. Depends, sometimes we were understrength, you know. Yeah. Anyway we were up against that first German paratrooper division I guess you heard that already eh?

**I met some of them.**

Did you?

**Yeah.**

Oh! They were pretty tough guys. They seen a lot of action in North Africa, you know. We had a tough time with them no foolin. Yeah we took Ortona house by house, street by street, you know, yeah. And attacked just about every bloody day, you know...

**Now, I'm interested in the uh, you got such a close up look at the Germans, cause you were taken prisoner**

Mm hm

**Um, what uh, did they seem like tough guys? They've been described as uh, as fanatic, or ferocious, in the battle.**

Hm. Well I guess I suppose they were, all right, they attacked. You know. They killed us, and we killed them, this is what it amounted to, you know. Yeah.

**You said this, this guy London was a German hater. Was that, um**

Don't uh

**No I won't**

He's dead now, don't uh

**Yeah**

Yeah I know.

I assumed that Bill was telling me not to use London's real name in my writing. On the other hand, he may have meant that he did not want me to ask more about London. I did neither; the name I am using is a pseudonym. In any case, the question that I had in mind was not so much about London as about the others.

**Yeah. Um, does that mean that most, most guys weren't like that?**

No I don't think we hated em, we used to say when we were down the line, "Going up to meet the hated Hun," but uh, I don't think that meant anything you know. I don't think we hated them, no.

**Do you remember the names of the guys, uh, who were taken prisoner by the Germans with you? Aside from London, you said there was a corporal, and**

No London wasn't, no he was, they attacked, uh

**Oh that was the attack**

Yeah that was the attack

**With the other guys**

Yeah. Well, there was Corporal Deriter. And there was only about five of us. God uh the names, yeah the names escape me. He's dead anyway. Yeah, I think uh, well my memory is not good.

[...]

**Were you guys scared, while, while you were**

I'll say we were.

**Yeah?**

How could you be not? Yeah. Yeah.

**Could you, could you talk to each other?**

Yeah, how do you mean talk?

**Like I'm wondering how you spent that day, like it was a few hours that the Germans had you there in that house**

Yeah about six seven hours

**Yeah so jeez I'm wondering what did you do**

Yeah we could talk to one another yeah, yeah, that's right.

**Was there a German watching you all the time?**

Oh yeah, yeah. He ducked upstairs as soon as the shooting started though. It was a be, you know better, better shot, better shooting upstairs too. The guys are down below, you see, you know, yeah.

**Why did they keep you in the house, why didn't they send you back to their**

Well the German officer said when it gets dark he says we'll take you back, behind the lines, you know. I guess they were afraid to move. Everybody was afraid to move there, I'm telling you.

**Really.**

Even Italians, yeah. Yeah.

**So the German guy spoke pretty good English.**

Just the officer. A little bit. You would understand him and that's all you know, yeah. The rest of the guys didn't... Yeah there was shooting come, through the doorway and everything and of course then the Germans all run upstairs, you know. Yeah. But uh, this guy come through, one of our guys come through the doorway, and this German stayed down and he shot him in the throat as I was telling you.

**Gee. And you guys, I guess you were unarmed, right? The Germans took your guns away**

Yeah that's right, yeah

**So what were you doing while the Canadians were coming, and the**

As soon as the shooting started we were laying flat on the floor I'm telling ya. Right through the doorway, yeah. Ah they were using uh, oh about 45 round, whatever they had. Probably a Bren gun, rifles and everything, you know, yeah. And um, somebody started to holler, in English and then they quit, you know. Yeah. Then they quit.

**Who quit?**

The, our guys quit shooting through the doorway, yeah.

**Oh I see**

I was confused sometimes during the story whether Bill was referring to Canadians or Germans; not sure if his "we" included the Germans lying on the floor, and if his "they" referred to Germans or the Canadian attackers. The blurring of boundaries, in which Bill sometimes adopted a perspective that included Germans, was evident in how he specified at one point that someone hollered "in English".

They kinda figured that uh, you know

**You were inside**

Yeah that's right, yeah.

**Did you guys, uh, after you were safe, did you talk about what happened?**

To who?

**I don't know, to each other, to the other, did you tell the story to the other guys in the regiment?**

Oh yeah, yeah, oh yeah, that's right, yeah.

I wonder how much Bill did talk about it. Imagine how strange it must have been for him to wake up after all of this, and find himself alone in a darkening street. In remembering it with me, Bill wasn't sure where he went after that. He said there was a roll call, and he was there, but then the postmaster had marked him down as dead. And despite his evidently shocked or confused state of mind, Bill went right back into action. He didn't tell anyone he was wounded – because he wasn't, he said, it was all, "just blast". If he was confused, he told me, then he was no different from many others.

**You had to go right back in?**

Uh well, I didn't even report it, you know.

**Really.**

I could have been a bit woozy but, a lot of them, most of the guys were then, you know. Battle fatigue and everything you know, yeah. So they probably didn't notice it. Yeah.

**Jeez. Battle fatigue.**

Yeah

**What was that?**

Well, so much noise and shells and everything you know and, a lot of stress, you know. Terrible amount of stress, yeah. Some of the guys couldn't take it, and they sent em back behind the line, you know, and, like uh, you know they got jobs in echelons behind the line and, yeah.

On the topic of stress and fatigue, I noticed that we had been talking for a long time. I did not want to impose any longer on Bill, and I had to think about making it to my destination for the night. When I said that I should be going, Bill wanted to share another thought. It was the one he had started with, when he had first greeted me in his kitchen.

And I guess the Germans had to be defeated I suppose. Yeah. I don't know who was wrong and who was right in that war but, all wars are the same aren't they? Uh, I don't think they need to happen at all, you know. Wars, you know. I don't think so.

**I appreciate you talking to me about it**

Yeah ok Ian

**Cause it's not an easy thing**

No, no

**And some guys I've called have told me that they didn't want to talk about it**

No, no. Yeah.

**But can I ask you one last question?**

Mm hm

**I'm just curious why, I know it's, it's not a nice or easy thing to talk about, what, why did you agree to talk to me? Cause you could have said I'm, you know I'm sorry, I'd rather not.**

Well I was going to say it but, I don't know I kind of took a liking to you, so

**Well I appreciate it**

Yeah. I thought you were sincere you know. The thing is, uh, I wish you wouldn't quote all of this, you know.

**Ok**

Yeah

**Can I tell the story but I just don't mention your name?**

Yeah ok.

So I have changed his name here. He was the only veteran whom I interviewed who did not want to be identified. Considering that his personal narrative is marked by identity confusion, possible dissociation, and alienation from others, there is a certain consistency in the fact that Bill's real name is missing from my dissertation.

### **Bill's Boundary Crossings**

At the outset, Bill had said he didn't remember much; then he went on to tell me a great deal, including some things that at first he hadn't wanted to tell. Reluctance to tell a story is often motivated by the wish to avoid emotional pain. Clearly, the story that Bill finally chose to tell me was painful to him. However, his request not to be named suggests that his reluctance was driven by more than just a wish not to revisit a painful personal experience; it was also influenced by feelings of shame or some fear of social disapproval. I wonder if Bill worried that there was something wrong about his sympathy and grief for the German officer. In addition, perhaps he felt it was a crime that London had killed the officer, and he didn't want his regimental colleagues to know that he had told the story. Perhaps he also worried that his feelings about war would be challenged and criticised.

I don't know who was wrong and who was right in that war but, all wars are the same aren't they? Uh, I don't think they need to happen at all, you know. Wars, you know. I don't think so.

He might have feared that he would be criticised for not knowing the "obvious" moral truths about the Second World War. He might be called naïve, or worse, for thinking that wars don't need to happen. Perhaps his WWI veteran father, whom he had mentioned to me on my arrival, would not have approved. In the social world that Bill inhabited, his feelings about war might be considered scandalous; it is possible that he felt he was taking a great risk in sharing them.

And perhaps Bill simply had a gut feeling that his experience of Ortona needed to be repressed, because it disturbed him on an existential level.

It was, after all, an experience of crossing boundaries of identity, in a small but still emotionally significant way. Not only did he smoke German cigarettes (which were, admittedly, bad) but he experienced the violence of the battle from the German point of view. He was in a "German house" when it was attacked by Canadians. His empathy for the Germans is evident in some of his words, such as:

What could they do? They all went upstairs, this is it, what could they do, yeah?  
They figured upstairs was better, you know.

I guess they were afraid to move. Everybody was afraid to move there, I'm telling you.

His words suggest a shared feeling, not just intellectual comprehension of the other. "What could they do... what could they do, yeah?" And then, imagine his difficulty, having shared cigarettes and bread with the enemy ("treated us real good, mind you"), only to witness the same enemy shoot his attacking fellow Canadian in the throat. The man drowned in his own blood, and the enemy German – the "little guy" – turned and pressed the machine gun to Bill's chest, ready to kill him, too. The Canadians who killed the surrendering German officer had also rescued Bill. Bill might feel that he betrays even himself, sometimes, in sympathizing somewhat with the enemy who were prepared to kill his rescuers and might have killed him. For all this, however, Bill still maintained a feeling of sympathy or shared suffering with his enemy. His refusal to judge the Germans was subtle but evident in the way he answered my question about how they have been portrayed in some reports. I had in mind descriptions such as "the fierce German defenders" on the jacket of Zuehlke's (1999) book about Ortona, and Matthew Halton's "Germans

were demons" on a text panel at the Canadian War Museum's Ortona diorama (see Chapter 4).

**Um, what uh, did they seem like tough guys? They've been described as uh, as fanatic, or ferocious, in the battle.**

Hm. Well I guess I suppose they were, all right, they attacked. You know. They killed us, and we killed them, this is what it amounted to, you know. Yeah.

He tactfully agreed with the description at first ("I guess I suppose they were") but he toned it down to, simply, "they attacked", and then suggested there was no difference: "They killed us, and we killed them." The sense of equivalence between Canadians and Germans was conveyed not only in the lexical content of his words but also in his poetic use of a symmetrical structure (or chiasmus) in which the word "killed" was repeated – and thereby emphasized – and the pronouns were mirrored, or traded places.<sup>17</sup> Bill had made the same poetic gesture at the start of our conversation, at the beginning of his story, when he told me how he had woken up from the grenade blast to find himself alone in the street with the sound of the battle around him:

they were shelling us and we were shelling them, you know.

Which brings us back to Bill's wound, and what he was doing in the moment when he was wounded:

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<sup>17</sup> "A chiasmus can be defined as a structure in which the order of words (A B) in one clause... is inverted in a second clause... (B A)" (Milner 1971:157). Milner adds that "chiasmus is particularly effective in framing statements that are intended to have a high mnemonic value" (157). It could be more accurate to represent the structure of chiasmus as ABC-CBA, in which the central term B maintains its position and is "framed" by the inverted terms A and C. On this function of chiasmus in framing the central invariant term, see Nänny (1988).

Well I was running across the street. I shouldn't say it, for a better shootin. They were upstairs in the building, you know.

[...]

I was packin a Bren gun and I got a hold of it you know. And uh, anyway, uh, they were shootin, I was trying to get across the street, you know, for a better shot with the Bren gun?

Moments after witnessing the German officer shot through the heart with his hands up, Bill was outside the house, trying to get a shot at the Germans who had "treated us real good". Bill's sympathetic question about the Germans, "What could they do, yeah?" might also be one that he asked himself: what could he do, once the fighting resumed, other than take his gun and try to turn it back at them, returning to the reciprocity of violence that was echoed in his speech.

That was when he was wounded. But it wasn't a wound, he said. "Just blast."

Bill's comrades were probably right: he probably was at the Christmas dinner. Bill thought that the "blast" happened on Christmas Day, that it was Christmas Day when he woke up from the blast, alone in the street. However, according to Bill's Company Sergeant Major, the men in Bill's section were taken prisoner after their Christmas dinner, which suggests that they were taken prisoner Christmas night and it was the morning after Christmas when the fight happened in which Bill was blasted unconscious.<sup>18</sup> Padre Durnford's diary note (quoted earlier) also suggests

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18 As reported in the *Edmonton Journal* on January 11, 1944 (quoted earlier): "'An hour after Christmas dinner we went back into action and during the night took out two sniper posts,' said the slim N.C.O. [Elaschuk]. 'At about 6:00 a.m., after we had consolidated our positions, about 32 Germans moving [sic] in on us and captured our flanking section.'" On the other hand, Bill's company commander, Don Harley, said in an interview in 1961 that he was wounded the day after this incident, and said he was wounded "on Boxing Day, at about noon" (see Interview by Dr. R.L. McDougall with Don Harley and Clifford Wood, Toronto, June 7, 1961, p.11. Seaforth Highlanders of Canada Archives.) If Harley's memory was correct in 1961, that would place the incident on Christmas Day. I think that Harley was probably mistaken, as the two reports closest to the time of the incident (the newspaper report and the padre's diary) place it after the Christmas dinner. Perhaps Harley was wounded during the rescue: Harley said he was wounded at noon by a grenade thrown from a balcony; Elaschuk told the reporter that they were rescued at 12:30pm; Bill described the Germans shooting from "upstairs" and Bill was also wounded (or knocked out) by a grenade thrown from above.

that the events happened on the night of Christmas and the morning after. Indeed, Durnford was told that the German officer had asked the Canadians about their Christmas dinner:

Questioned by Jerry officer about Xmas day meals. About 'Sherman tanks' then spoke English. Then later he and his were captured & shot.

Bill remembered the officer's questions about the tanks. He did not remember Christmas – even though they said he was there. Even the German had said he was there.

### **'At the Going Down of the Sun...'**

Bill said goodbye to me in the kitchen. I went outside alone, and walked back up the dirt track to my car. Bill's son was no longer there. The valley was quiet, in shadow as the sun had dropped just below the mountains. The half-blind sheepdog followed me to my car, then turned and tottered back to the house. I looked back across the valley before I got into my car, but I did not see any deer.

As I drove slowly up the dirt road, I wondered how it was going to be for Bill now that he had told this story. I thought of him squeezing his eyes shut when he remembered the picture from the officer's pocket. With yellow leaves from the birch tree forest falling on my windshield, I thought about how a feeling for an unknown man and his wife and daughter had travelled to a place that was so remote from them, and had survived for many years; and how the fact that they were remembered in this quiet mountain valley, was something that they would never know.

## Chapter Nine: Ortona in Remembrance

### **Framing Ortona, Forgetting Dissonance**

Until 1998, there was little public remembrance of the battle of Ortona in Canada. Veterans Affairs organized pilgrimages for veterans to Canadian war cemeteries in Italy that included visits and ceremonies at the Canadian war cemetery near Ortona (the Moro River Canadian War Cemetery), but these pilgrimages received little to no national media attention. The battle, like much of the Italian Campaign, was not as well known to Canadians as the Normandy invasion and the liberation of Holland. Apart from the individual remembrances of veterans, including private trips to Ortona, the battle was commemorated within the regiments that had fought there. The Seaforth Highlanders maintained a tradition of reenacting their Christmas dinner (e.g. G. Mason 2011; Jeff Nagel 2009). The Loyal Edmonton Regiment's role in the battle was commemorated by a mural depicting an Ortona street fight; the mural, *The Battle of Ortona*, is mounted on an atrium wall inside the Prince of Wales Armouries Heritage Centre which houses the Loyal Edmonton Regiment Museum and the City of Edmonton Archives (Loyal Edmonton Regiment Museum 2010).<sup>1</sup>

With the 1998 Christmas reconciliation organized by Ted Griffiths, Ortona became a more significant object of national Remembrance discourse. The 1998 reconciliation took place near the beginning of a time of revitalization of Remembrance when new objects of Remembrance were being constituted, including the construction of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the

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<sup>1</sup> The painting, by Gerald Trottier, was commissioned by an Ottawa army supply unit in 1945 for use in their canteen, and donated to the Loyal Edmonton Regiment in 1961 (Loyal Edmonton Regiment Museum 2010).

renewal of the Canadian War Museum, and the restoration of the Vimy Ridge monument followed by the large and widely publicized pilgrimage to Vimy Ridge (see Chapter 2). However, the 1998 reconciliation was an awkward fit with Remembrance, as its main purpose was not to celebrate Canadian achievements or sacrifices but rather to "reconcile" with the Germans; although the meaning of reconciliation was ambiguous, it did raise the possibility (discussed in Chapter 5) that veterans had some feelings that they needed to address that were related to their actions of fighting and killing the enemy. In Chapter 5, I described how the 1998 reconciliation became an occasion for the reiteration of Remembrance discourse, both in the fundraising campaign prior to the event, and in some of the media reports and publicity from the event itself. In this reiteration of Remembrance through the Ortona reconciliation, the feelings of veterans towards the Germans were sidelined. Since 1998, Ortona has become a prominent object of Canadian Remembrance, most notably with the construction of new monuments and a major youth pilgrimage. Ortona became prominent to Canadian Remembrance due to a conjuncture of forces: on one hand, there were the interests of some veterans in addressing feelings that transgressed the sacrificial frame of Remembrance; on the other hand, there was the revitalization of Remembrance in the context of a more aggressive turn in Canadian military and foreign policy. As Ortona has been increasingly "Remembered" – that is, established as a popular object of Canadian war remembrance – the veterans' dissonant acts of remembering the battle, which were briefly and very partially expressed in 1998, have been almost completely forgotten.

### **The Price of Peace Monument**

The predominance of the sacrificial frame over veterans' dissonant acts of remembrance was

already signalled in the midst of the 1998 reconciliation Christmas Eve dinner. With Canadian and German veterans seated at tables, having "broken bread" and raised their glasses in a toast together, and following Ted Griffiths' declaration that "under God's roof, we are all His children; we are all His brothers", there was this ceremonial moment: "Peter Goldring [MP for Edmonton East] lifted the Maple Leaf flag covering the bronze model of Ottawan Rob Surette's sculpture called *The Price of Peace* depicting a Canadian soldier kneeling over his fallen comrade, the life-size model to be erected next spring in the Ortona town square, and it drew murmurs of approval from the Canadian veterans" (McRae 1998d). The model had been made by the artist during the fundraising efforts in August and September 1998 as a show of support for the veterans; Surette had offered to make a life-sized version of the sculpture for free (McRae 1998c). Instead, the surplus from the fundraising was used to pay Surette a commission and pay for the transport and installation of the sculpture in Ortona. The sculpture was erected as a monument and officially unveiled in a square in central Ortona (Piazza Plebiscito) in October 1999 during an official VAC pilgrimage.<sup>2</sup>

*The Price of Peace* depicts two Canadian soldiers (Figures 28-30). One is lying dead or dying on the ground, his helmet overturned; the other is kneeling with one hand on his fallen comrade's back. Neither soldier is holding a weapon. Because it depicts such a mournful, non-aggressive scene, the monument has been interpreted as an "undeniable antiwar statement" (Edmonton Journal 2006). Ted Griffiths described the monument in universal terms: "It shows the humanity of one man for another in his final moments of life" (Edmonton Journal 2006).

What observers have failed to note, because it is so taken for granted, is that *The Price of*

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2 The stone base of the monument was designed by local architect and historian Saverio di Tullio, author of a graphic-novel style history of the battle (di Tullio 1998). The base is constructed from stones of houses that were ruined during the battle as well as pebbles from the sea (Salcuni 1999).

Peace asserts and concretizes the sacrificial framing of war whereby the essential and most memorable act of soldiers is not killing, but dying. The monument also focuses attention on the surviving soldier's act of witnessing his comrade's death. As such, it reinforces the idea promoted in Remembrance discourse that veterans' most powerful memories are of similar witnessing, and that veterans' primary concern in any act of remembrance is to commemorate dead comrades. The monument therefore represents a (probably unwitting) rejection of the very purpose of the 1998 reconciliation with the Germans which was presumably to share memories across national boundaries and to lament and atone for the violence that each side had done to the other. The monument fails to recognize the uniqueness of that event which momentarily gestured beyond the frame of Remembrance; instead, the monument reinforces conventional Remembrance discourse with its focus on the non-aggressive, self-sacrificing Canadian soldier. Ironically, as the public memory of the 1998 reconciliation fades, the Price of Peace monument seems destined to endure as the 1998 event's most tangible legacy. The Price of Peace is effectively a monument to the power of Remembrance discourse to eclipse dissonant acts of remembrance.

In addition to the monument's iconography which reinforces the sacrificial frame, the title of the monument resonates with another theme of Remembrance discourse. As we gaze upon the dying Canadian soldier, the title declares that this soldier's violent death in combat is "the price of peace". The idea that soldiers' deaths in war are "the price of peace" is only a small step removed from the idea that war is necessary for peace (see Chapter 2). Certainly, the Ortona monument has been invoked to support such claims that violent sacrifice is a necessary condition for living in peace, as if this were a universal truth. Such an affirmation was made in Ortona at the site of the monument by then-Governor General Adrienne Clarkson in October 2004. Clarkson visited Ortona as part of a VAC pilgrimage with veterans to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the

Italian Campaign. At Ortona, she unveiled a plaque that was newly attached to the Price of Peace monument to mark the designation of the battle of Ortona by the Canadian government as "an event of national historic significance" (Parks Canada 2004). In her speech at the monument, Clarkson said:

The price of peace is staggering. Historically, as it did here in Ortona, it has required blood, the extinction of horrifying numbers of human beings.... It is the price, however, that Canadians in the Second World War, and the Italian people that they helped to liberate, were willing to pay (Clarkson 2004).

Peace requires blood payment: Clarkson might not want to put it so bluntly, but that is the logic of her statement.<sup>3</sup> A similar logic was at work in a Remembrance Day speech in the House of Commons by Peter Goldring, in which the MP for Edmonton East invoked the Price of Peace monument to make a universal statement about peace:

In Ortona's Piazza del Plebiscito [sic] is a poignant memorial of two soldiers, one lying dead and one bent over in grief, created by Ottawa artist Robert Surette. Entitled "The Price of Peace", it speaks of the supreme toll in the "Stalingrad of Italy", the battle for Ortona, and for all who have faced their soul in the finality of the theatre of war. [...] The price of peace is paid in war. We ought never to forget those that serve, those who truly pay the price of peace (Goldring 2011).

The Ortona monument was invoked to support the claim that peace requires war, and that peace is a military achievement for which we must thank soldiers.

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3 Compare Clarkson's words with those of Lucy Maud Montgomery (quoted in Chapter 2) during the First World War: "'Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.' Without shedding of blood there is no anything! Everything, it seems to me, must be bought by sacrifice. The race has marked every footstep of its painful ascent by blood. And now torrents of it must flow!" (quoted in Alan Young 1989:18).

## The Sherman Tank Monument

The Price of Peace monument was a Canadian initiative, although it required the agreement of the City of Ortona and was presented as a gift to the people of Ortona.<sup>4</sup> In 2008, a second monument was created jointly by Canadian veterans and the City of Ortona (although most of the effort seems to have come from Canadians). As the City of Ortona was developing a Museum of the Battle of Ortona, there was local interest in finding and displaying a Sherman tank of the kind that Canadians had used in the battle. Through the efforts of Ted Griffiths and Canadian embassy and military staff in Europe, a Sherman was purchased from a museum in Holland. Private donations from Canadians paid for the purchase and transportation of the tank to Ortona. The tank was originally placed beside the Price of Peace monument, but only as a temporary location. In 2011, it was moved to a roundabout outside the city near the Ortona exit of the A14 Autostrada (divided highway).<sup>5</sup>

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- 4 The gift was not uncontroversial. Did the people of Ortona want a statue of a dead Canadian soldier in the historic centre of their town? The local debate over the monument is beyond the scope of my dissertation, but I wish to mention here – because it does not seem to have occurred to most Canadians – that it was not a simple matter. When some Ortonesi (including the mayor) objected on aesthetic grounds to giving the monument a central location, they were accused by other Ortonesi of having fascist sympathies. However, even some local supporters of the monument told me that they wished it was more uplifting. Interestingly, Willie Fretz, one of the German veterans who attended the 1998 reconciliation, told me when I met him in May 2000 that he intervened in the debate and helped to convince the mayor to place the monument in the relatively (but not too) central Piazza Plebiscito. When I asked Willie why he had gone out of his way – he had made a trip from Germany – to support a monument that did not represent him, he told me that even though the figures were Canadian, the monument represented an experience of all soldiers. The Price of Peace monument is more centrally located than the older Monument to Civilian Victims of War which is at the Ortona city cemetery (see note later this chapter).
- 5 I have not been able to observe the tank monument first-hand, as it was erected in 2008 after my most recent visit to Ortona (2000). My information about the monument's history and design has been gleaned from online sources: newsletters of the Three Rivers Regiment; discussion forums of Canadian military enthusiasts and tank enthusiasts; and local Italian newspapers. A few visitors to the monument have posted very good quality panoramic and close-up photographs of it which have greatly facilitated my analysis of the monument, particularly its inscriptions/dedications. The Sherman tank was purchased from the National War and Resistance Museum of Overloon, Netherlands, for \$90,000. Some Dutch, Canadian, and other military history and tank enthusiasts objected to its sale, as they argued that the tank had a historical significance in the Netherlands and was not the type of Sherman that the Canadians had used in Italy. Their petition to the Overloon museum was unsuccessful. Funds for the purchase of the tank were donated by Canadians Lt. Gen. Jim Gervais (retired), Harry Steele, Seymour Schulich, Michael Wekerle, John Cleghorn, and the Dillon Foundation. As for the Ortona citizens' interest in procuring a tank, I have little information. I gather from some media reports that a major

The Sherman, named "Athena", is something of a hybrid monument, with slightly different meanings affixed to it by Italians and Canadians. At the rear of the tank is a plaque sponsored by the city and provincial governments and the Ortona Rotary Club; the text of the plaque dedicates the tank "to the honour and glory of those civilians and soldiers who sacrificed their lives in a bloody battle, and so that the recovered spirit of brotherhood will always guide the way for people in future centuries".<sup>6</sup> The Italian inscription does not specify the nationalities of the soldiers who are commemorated. The words "recovered brotherhood" could be a reference to post-war peace among European nations, but the flags surrounding the monument suggest that the intention is to remember the 1998 reconciliation event among Canadian and German

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motivation was to support and promote the Museum of the Battle of Ortona (Museo della Battaglia di Ortona) which opened in 2002 (see Edmonton Journal 2006). In his regimental newsletter of December 2009, Griffiths reported that the City of Ortona had requested to move the tank to its current location near the Autostrada exit in order "to lure more visitors into Ortona". This location was acceptable to the Three Rivers Regiment veterans, as the present-day roundabout happens to be the site of a December 18, 1943 battle ("Cider Crossroads") on the Canadian tankers' approach to Ortona in which five of their comrades were killed. However, the City of Ortona is now planning to relocate the tank once again, to a central location closer to the museum, and to position the tank in a more dynamic, aggressive (forward-raised) posture. According to local Italian media, the costs of the relocation will be paid by the Canadian Embassy in Rome. See the following Three Rivers Regiment newsletters: <http://www.12rbc.ca/upload/pdf/news/12—car-newsletters-november-2008.pdf>; [http://www.12rbc.ca/upload/pdf/news/12th\\_car\\_newsletter-december-2009.pdf](http://www.12rbc.ca/upload/pdf/news/12th_car_newsletter-december-2009.pdf); online military and tank enthusiast forums: <http://ww2talk.com/forums/topic/10188-ortona-sherman/>; <http://www.mapleleafup.net/forums/showthread.php?t=7443>; and online Italian media: <http://www.primadanoi.it/news/cronaca/-5196/Un-carro-armato-canadese-entra-in-citta-dopo-oltre-60-anni.html>; <http://www.piazzarossetti.it/it-it/notizie/5156b89dd1997090050073c6/il-carro-armato-canadese-dopo-67-anni-torna-alle-quattro-strade-di-ortona>; <http://ilcentro.gelocal.it/chieti/cronaca/2012/09/22/news/il-carro-armato-athena-trasloca-in-via-d-annunzio-1.5738567>; <http://www.chietiscalco.it/la-voce-dei-politici/195-altri-comuni/17192-ortona-carro-armato—polemiche-sulle-bugie.html>.

6 "...ad onore e gloria di quanti, civili e militari, fecero sacrificio della loro vita in una sanguinosa battaglia, e perché il ritrovato fratellanza guidi sempre il cammino dei popoli nei secoli futuri." Ellipsis in the original. In post-WWII Italy, it was common for civilian victims of the war to be recognized as martyrs and sacrificial victims (see Forlenza 2012 for an analysis of this discourse and its role in postwar Italian politics).

There is also a monument to the civilian victims of the battle of Ortona near the entrance to the city cemetery. Created by local artist Tommaso Cascella in 1965, the Monument to Civilian Victims of War (Monumento alle Vittime Civili di Guerra) is in the form of a triptych, with panels depicting scenes of destruction and civilian (and animal) suffering on the left and right, and a Pietà (Mary holding the dead body of Jesus) above the ruins of Ortona in the centre. It is notable that, while the monument commemorates the suffering of Ortona, it is dedicated to all "civilian victims of war" in general. In his speech at the monument's inauguration, the mayor of Ortona said that "whatever the motives, [war] cannot solve the questions nor eliminate the discords that trouble humanity; it can only sow death and ruin, creating the conditions and the premises for new, even more deadly and disastrous conflicts, yet always futile and inconclusive" (Di Stefano 1965).

combatants. The Sherman tank is encircled by flags of all the Allied nations whose troops constituted the British Eighth Army in the Italian Campaign, including Canada, as well as the flags of Germany and Italy.<sup>7</sup>

Athena has received little attention in terms of Canadian public commemoration; it does not appear to have been included in the itineraries of VAC or youth group pilgrimages, and (in contrast to The Price of Peace) it has not received much Canadian media attention. This may be due to the tank's location outside the city centre. However, from 2008 to 2011, the tank was centrally located. It may also be due to the tank's designation, from the Canadian perspective, as a monument to a single regiment, the Three Rivers (12th Armoured) Regiment, and as a memorial to the individuals of that regiment who were killed in Ortona. At the front of the tank is a plaque that dedicates the tank in English and French as follows: "In proud memory of the men of the 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment The Three Rivers Regiment who gave their lives at Ortona in WWII." The names of twenty men are listed, followed by the Latin patriotic phrase, "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" (It is sweet and glorious to die for one's country).

The Italian aspect of the Sherman tank monument commemorates all soldiers and civilians and celebrates the spirit of reconciliation. The Canadian aspect of the monument is a more exclusive commemoration of Canadian individuals and a celebration of Canadian patriotic sacrifice. What these different messages share in common is a focus on sacrifice and a displacement of violence. The Italian message invokes sacrifice even without any clear sacrificial object; it declares that all soldiers and civilians "sacrificed their lives" in the battle. While the meaning of "sacrifice" in this context is unclear, the message focuses attention on the act of dying

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to British and Canadian troops, the Eighth Army included troops from Australia, New Zealand, British India, Poland, Free French, Greece, Rhodesia and South Africa. The Athena monument represents British India with the flags of present-day India, Pakistan, and Nepal.

in battle, just as the Canadian message points to the deaths of the members of the tank regiment, while remaining silent on soldiers' actions of inflicting violence on others.

When one steps back from these commemorative webs of meanings, it seems rather odd that a tank could be employed to displace thoughts of wartime violence. After all, the tank is a weapon, a killing machine. The War Diary of the Three Rivers Regiment describes some of the Sherman tank actions during the Ortona battle:

12th TANKS taught the enemy the price of evacuating ORTONA 'according to plan'. House by house and street by street our machine guns took ORTONA. 75's [tank shells] blew upper stories to bits. Tanks deliberately crashed into cellars, backed out again and advanced, leaving crushed German gun crews in their wake.<sup>8</sup>

Could veterans of the tank regiment avoid remembering such violence when they gaze upon the monument of the Sherman tank? In addition to its dual commemorative significations for Italians and Canadians, the Sherman in Ortona has a hidden commemorative attachment to Ted Griffiths, who was instrumental in organizing the acquisition of the tank and its erection as a monument. The name "Athena" is painted on the Sherman. Few visitors could know this, but Athena was the name of Ted's tank. Ted's troubling experience of destroying a church with Athena's gun was described in Chapter 5. In his written memoir of the battle of Ortona, Ted further describes his vivid recollections of inflicting violent and gruesome death with his tank. On December 24th, Ted was speaking to a Seaforth infantryman from his tank when the Seaforth was killed by a German sniper. "Even though death was all around us, the shock of his dying before my eyes filled me

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<sup>8</sup> War Diary, 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Three Rivers Regiment), entry for December 29, 1943. Library and Archives Canada.

with a terrible rage, and I gave my gunner an order to destroy everything in sight on both sides of the street" (Griffiths 2000:40). He describes the technique of his tank crew, and how he went back to observe its effectiveness after the battle:

A lesson we learned early on in Sicily was how effective our 75mm explosive rounds were if we used the delayed-action fuse. By turning a screw on the shell casing, the explosion was delayed for .05 seconds, long enough to penetrate an outer wall before exploding inside. We used this technique extensively throughout the Ortona battle, and later I went into a couple of houses to see how effective this method was. I emerged with no doubt in my mind – arms, legs, a headless torso, and bodies were strewn about like an obscene depiction of Dante's Inferno (40).

Other tankers might remember similar confrontations with the material human consequences of their aggressive uses of their tanks. Another veteran of the Three Rivers Regiment recalled surveying the human costs of a tank battle together with a German tanker during a truce at the Moro River:

In Italy we fought against the Hermann Goering Division and it got so bad at the Moro River just before Ortona we had to call a three-day truce to clean up the wounded and the dead. I remember speaking to one sergeant in that German division who was with the Red Cross. He came beside the tank, spoke good English and asked for a cigarette. He said, 'You know, this is ridiculous, this is awful. Look at all the bodies.' We could not manoeuvre the tank without driving on top of one.... [The German said] 'Here we are picking up each other's dead and wounded and tomorrow or the next day we will be blowing each other's brains out.' He was good to talk to and everything else (Augustine Austin Smith in Quigley 2006:18-19).

However, the tank was not only an instrument of violence; it also provided its crew with shelter from violence, and could be a space of camaraderie for the men who spent so much time inside it.

The War Diary of the Three Rivers Regiment describes this peaceful moment inside a tank in Ortona on Christmas Eve:

Dusk found all members huddled inside the tank, drinking the next days ration of rum and consuming a Christmas cake received by one of the boys. For a few short moments war and everything was forgotten. Faces looked relaxed; what they were thinking about no one will know but it is certain that war and their present situation did not enter their thoughts. A few minutes later the celebration was over, one party went back to wireless watch and the other to do vigil over a lone tank harboured on a lonely road that was covered by enemy machine gun fire, mortar and shells.<sup>9</sup>

The tank was violent, destructive, but it could also be like a home, such that – as one can sense from the passage above, with its reference to "vigil over a lone tank" – the Canadian tankers might become protective of their Sherman as people can be towards a working animal companion, like a horse. It is evident that, in bringing a Sherman tank monument to Ortona, Ted Griffiths found a way to quietly commemorate his own individual tank, Athena, which – as a constant wartime companion – might also serve as an embodiment of his personal and multifaceted experiences of the battle.

Sitting now at the centre of a roundabout beside a major highway, Athena is used to attract tourists to Ortona and to publicly commemorate the dead of the Three Rivers Regiment, the deaths of all soldiers and civilians, and the 1998 reconciliation. Compared to The Price of Peace, Athena has relatively more potential to unsettle the certainties of Canadian Remembrance discourse. However, few Canadian visitors will even find it, as it is not centrally located, nor is it included in the itineraries of most pilgrimages. Also, as one contributor to an online WWII

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9 War Diary, 12th Canadian Armoured Regiment (Three Rivers Regiment), entry for December 24, 1943. Library and Archives Canada.

discussion forum complained, at the roundabout "there [is] no-where [to] stop to get out and look at it!"<sup>10</sup> For those Canadians who do manage to stop and look, few will be able to read the Italian-language message about brotherhood among civilians and soldiers of all nations (although the flags might hint at it); instead, the Canadian-sponsored inscriptions in French, English and Latin will direct Canadian visitors to contemplate the patriotic self-sacrifice of Canadian tankers who died in Ortona. Nothing at the Athena monument, other than the tank's gun, gestures at the acts of violence that are vividly recalled by veterans who were tankers in the battle.

### **The 'Remembering Ortona' Youth Pilgrimage**

The battle of Ortona has been used to promote the sacrificial framing of war not only through the construction of the Price of Peace and Athena monuments, but also through a major youth pilgrimage and the publicity surrounding it. In November 2008, a pilgrimage of 1,200 Canadian students<sup>11</sup> to Ortona was organized by the same Ontario teacher, Dave Robinson, who had organized the 2007 Birth of a Nation Tour to Vimy Ridge (see Chapter 2). The "Remembering Ortona Tour" was planned to coincide with the 65th anniversary of the battle and it followed essentially the same pedagogy and ritual as the Vimy tour: prior to the trip, every participating student researched the life of a Canadian soldier who had died in the battle, and then in the subsequent ritual at the battlefield cemetery, students stood at their soldier's grave while dressed in a common uniform representing Canadian identity – in Ortona 2008, these were red windbreakers over khaki shirts (Black 2009; Sarmatiuk 2008).

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10 See <http://ww2talk.com/forums/topic/10188-ortona-sherman/>.

11 Reports of the number of participants are inconsistent, ranging between 1,200 and 1,500. I have settled on the lowest number, as I suspect that the higher numbers might be including teachers and other support staff. In any case, it was a very substantial pilgrimage.

An aspect of the Ortona youth pilgrimage that differed from the Vimy 2007 pilgrimage was the stronger connection that was made to the Canadian military engagement in Afghanistan. In a programme called "Hands Across a Generation", students were paired with Canadian soldiers serving in Afghanistan. On a square piece of fabric, students recorded information about themselves and their (deceased) soldier from Ortona; meanwhile, soldiers serving in Afghanistan did the same, and posted their fabric to their assigned student in Canada; all of the material was then assembled into a giant banner that was taken to Ortona on the pilgrimage and carried by the 1,200 students in a procession from the Moro River Canadian War Cemetery into the centre of Ortona (Black 2009; Sarmatiuk 2008). As such, students were encouraged to make affective bonds not only with "fallen" soldiers to be remembered, but also with the present-day military and the mission in Afghanistan. The remembrance of Ortona was thus an occasion to promote a sentimental acceptance of Canada's contemporary military and foreign policy.

Another aspect of the Remembering Ortona Tour for some youths was the mock combat training that they received before the trip. In October 2008, 200 students attended "Camp Husky" at Connaught Range and Primary Training Centre, a Canadian Forces training facility near Ottawa. At this overnight camp, students experienced battle training and simulation focused on the methods and conditions of the Ortona battle (Paquet 2009). The purpose was to make the youths "affectively attuned" to their designated fallen soldiers from Ortona.

When the students have finished this learning and training experience, they will not only be knowledgeable of the tactics and times of the Battle of Ortona, but they will also be affectively attuned to their designated soldier and his role in what has been known as the "Little Stalingrad" [...] The rationale of this program is to instil in the mind of those traveling to Ortona an idea of what the soldier dwelled on, endured, and faced in 1943. The living experience mode is that venue whereby the Ortona pilgrim can best identify with the dead soldier

he /she has been assigned for the Ortona dedication (John McRae Secondary School n.d.a).

The pilgrims were exposed to a Sherman tank and a variety of weapons including Bren guns (Paquet 2009). The lessons included: "introduction to the battle"; "the face of the Canadian soldier"; "the face of the German soldier"; "command and control"; "firepower"; "shock action"; "poor bloody infantry"; and "house-to-house street fighting and unarmed combat". This last item was described as a lesson in "the challenges of fighting in built up areas, house clearing and the deadly business of unarmed combat".<sup>12</sup> One has to wonder how the youths were "affectively attuned" by these lessons, and to what extent (if any) they became attuned to the feelings of veterans such as Mel, who had been so reluctant to explain anything about the methods and experiences of "houseclearing" which he had actually used in Ortona. Recall this part of Mel's answer when he deviated from my question about tactics in Ortona:

I, I don't think, I don't think any veteran wants, wants the schoolkids today to, to glamourise war or anything. It's a terrible thing. Nobody should have to go through it. What, what, what, what fun is there, what, what is there to killing each other, you know? And really, the only thing we've learned over these wars is how better to kill each other, and how, how many more people we can kill at the one time, you know. That's the only thing that we've learned over wars.

Compare Mel's words to the apparently untroubled remark by a student who attended the lessons in Ortona street fighting prior to the 2008 pilgrimage: "Camp Husky was an amazing experience.... The stuff we learned there was very important in Ortona" (Paquet 2009). In an

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.network54.com/Forum/28173/thread/1222623098/Camp+Husky+October+3-5+2008>, accessed March 2, 2014.

online slideshow of Camp Husky produced by one of the participating schools, teachers and students are pictured smiling as they handle rifles and machine guns (John McRae Secondary School n.d.b). There may well have been students (or teachers) who were troubled by these lessons, but the camp certainly seems to have been designed to generate excitement about the tactical dimensions of killing; if there was attention to the possible moral or emotional impact of such actions, it is not evident in the agenda and reports that are available from the camp experience.

When the youth pilgrims arrived at the Moro River Canadian Cemetery near Ortona on November 25, 2008, they conducted a ceremony that involved a procession with flags, laying wreaths at the Cross of Sacrifice, a sermon by a Canadian Forces padre, speeches by a number of students, a musical performance, and – the central rite – all 1,200 students standing at attention at the graves of their assigned soldiers, then kneeling in unison to place a poppy or small cross at the grave (Sarmatiuk 2008; Black 2009; John McRae Secondary School n.d.c). Reports from the ceremony describe the emotional responses of youth that are consistent with the affective order of Remembrance; that is, responses that demonstrate that the youth were "affectively attuned" to Remembrance discourse. One student, Tory, expressed thoughts about sacrifice: "I was overwhelmed with emotion when I got to the gravesite and actually saw where my soldier was buried.... To think that someone was willing to risk their own lives for the lives of others really touched my heart" (Sarmatiuk 2008). Another student, Kelly, expressed national pride: "I haven't been as proud to be a Canadian as I am right now. To actually be here and to honour those soldiers who fell during that time. The amount of pride I feel for those men – and for those veterans who are still alive – is just immense" (Black 2009). Another, Taylor, made a connection to Afghanistan: "It really hits you when you see the number of graves here, and you realize that

65 years later Canadians are still serving their country, and dying for their country" (Black 2009).

The youth pilgrims then marched in a procession that closed the road to traffic for a few kilometres, carrying the Hands Across a Generation banner from the hill of the cemetery to the centre of Ortona. Teachers encouraged their students to think of themselves as soldiers of the past, as if they were having a mystical experience across time:

Teacher Stephen Hills of the Thames Valley District School Board in Ontario helps frame the historic moment. 'Once again we have a generation of Canadian youth standing on the ground near the Moro River, facing the hill of Ortona.<sup>13</sup> Once again Canada is represented by its youth from across the country.... They have travelled here to show that Canada's youth do remember the sacrifices of the men buried here. They do remember the soldiers who gave their lives' (Black 2009).

The teacher's use of the emphatic "do" suggests that there might be some doubt about it, as if the moral integrity of the youth had been in question. The idea that the pilgrimage was a rite of passage to a superior moral status was further expressed in the organizer's remarks:

Of the march into Ortona, Robinson observed: 'It began to rain for our march into the city square; many remarked that the rain was a symbolic cleansing, a rebirth of memory. I found it most fitting, not too harsh but a stark reminder for the students as they followed in the footsteps of their soldier' (Sarmatiuk 2008).

Why did the youth need to be cleansed? What was the impurity? There may well be no clear answer to that question. Perhaps it was necessary to presume such an impurity in order to assert the power of the ritual to raise the participants onto a higher plane of moral authority, now that

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13 Compare this with Figure 4. The photo appears in Zuehlke's (1999) book and some websites related to Ortona, and may be what Hills had in mind.

they had fully embraced and performed the affective order of Remembrance and become "one" with the soldiers of past, present, and (presumably) future. As Robinson said, the pilgrims "followed in the footsteps of their soldier" (Sarmatiuk 2008).

In the midst of these affirmations of Remembrance conventions, one student's reported remarks hint at a possible feeling of ambivalence. Amie said:

A lot of people say we remember... we remember. It is kind of weird coming here, but when you are actually here – standing in front of the grave of someone you have researched – it personalizes it and makes it very real. People died by the hundreds near here. We can't forget that (Black 2009, ellipsis in original).

In this remark, Amie seems to be reflecting on the compulsion to repeatedly "remember" and notes that she feels "weird", even as she reports feeling what her teachers hoped she would: that she is having a "personal" and "very real" experience. Perhaps the feeling of weirdness that afflicted Amie in this moment was a vague recognition that she was suppressing doubts and questions about the meanings of Remembrance. Another student described her feeling as "surreal" (Black 2009). The pilgrimage did not necessarily produce 1,200 fully confirmed young adherents of Remembrance conventions. It is possible, for example, that the intensity of the pilgrimage and its ritual may actually have prompted some youth to wonder about, rather than embrace, the fervour of the discourse and their role within it; they may have experienced "the pinch between 'what I do feel' and 'what I should feel'" (Hochschild 1983:57).

### **Veterans' Experiences in the Cemetery**

Any youth who felt a sense of estrangement from themselves or the ritual in the cemetery would

have been "out of tune" from Remembrance discourse but nevertheless would have been "in tune" with at least a few veterans. For example, when I asked Sam about a Remembrance ceremony, he gave me an answer that suggested that the dead cannot know they are remembered:

**What do you think about when the priest says they made the supreme sacrifice?**

When the which?

**Like in the ceremony there when the minister says they made**

Well... the guys made the supreme sacrifice, didn't they? But they were gone, they wouldn't know anything about it, they were history from then on, just history, eh?

For Sam, whatever the priest or celebrants might say, "the guys" do not know about it; the ritual does nothing for the dead because they are "gone". His words are reminiscent of Charles Sorley's refusal of transcendence (see Chapter 3).

For Mel, a visit to the cemetery at Ortona brought back a memory of an absurd and confusing death. He told me how he had started crying as he walked down the line of headstones:

Couldn't help yourself. See, some of these guys, and how they got in, 16, 17, 18, you know, how they got in, I don't know. But then I got to reading some of the names, like Buck Holder, standing next to me when, when he got it, you know. I can still see the look of a, a, amazement on his face, you know. In fact, somebody said "Buck you crazy bugger, you shot somebody." And uh, Buck said "I didn't do anythin!" and all of a sudden, bang. He's got it, you know. We come under machine gun fire, it was off to our left, just starting in to Ortona, we were going through a, a, a, I don't know whether it was a olive grove, or a grove of some kind, and so we all just hit the dirt.

For Denis, visiting the cemetery brought back an uncanny memory not only of the mutilated corpse of a fellow Seaforth signaller ("what was left of him") but also of Denis's own moment of cruelty, his transformation into a "hard" man:

I had to be part of the burial detail. We brought Pop or what was left of him back, buried him with his headphones still on.

**Still on.**

Yeah. Yeah. And it was an eerie sort of place, it was kind of a, olive grove, or orange grove, or something. And a mist, about four feet off the ground, mist. Fireflies. Fffffff! It was, I say it was really quite a sight. Just one of those memories, and then I went back and saw his grave and this all came back. He'd been uh, the men had called him Pop because he was a little bit older. But anyway. We had a couple of Italians to help us dig the graves, and uh, I was kind of emotionally upset... and they started complainin and whining about, oh we're hungry and we're tired, and that's when I pulled my Tommy gun and I said dig you son of a bitch, dig. And I would have shot em. You know. You get hardened, you get inured.

I found that the veterans who spoke to me about their visits to the cemeteries did not describe having comforting sentiments that affirm the patriotic or consoling messages that are found at these sites, such as "Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori" and "They shall live for evermore". Maurice told me about the struggle not to cry, which was made difficult in the cemetery when he was confronted by the limits of personal memory:

It's strange that, you'd think grown people shouldn't cry but uh, you feel just like a little kid. Lost, you know? And it's uh, just a very strange feeling but you have to cry. It's, you know?

**Hm. When you get to, uh**

Yeah, when you go into the cemetery, especially

**Yeah**

if, for example, uh, one of the guys uh, what was his name now? Wychopen. You either knew 'em by a nickname, a first name, or the last name. And I always knew him as Wychopen. And uh, for some reason, you know, the guy gets wounded or gets sick and goes out, and you don't see him again. And uh, you assume that, you know, that he's gone home or whatever. And all of a sudden go into these cemeteries and then you find his, his name on a, on a tombstone, eh? And boy, that, that really shocks you. Because you, you know, you've forgotten about the guy, and, and you feel guilty that you forgot about him, and, and uh, so it's uh

While Maurice had been strongly affected by visits to the cemetery and to the Price of Peace monument, he also told me a story that was at first hidden, about a private act of remembrance that he had performed in Ortona. Maurice's story returns us to The Price of Peace; it is also a story of how he went beyond it, both physically (in terms of walking to a different place in Ortona) and figuratively (in terms of remembering beyond the monument's sacrificial frame). Indeed, this dissertation will close with the story of Maurice's transformation into a new kind of storyteller with his own intangible memorial in Ortona.

**Finding the Place: Maurice's Dissonant Act of Remembrance**

Sitting on the couch in his living room, Maurice showed me a photograph of himself standing next to The Price of Peace. Maurice had been in attendance for the official unveiling of the monument in October 1999 as part of the VAC pilgrimage. Maurice told me that he was impressed by the realism of the monument. The artist did a really good job,

he said. He had been told that somehow the artist had used actual webbing and other remnants of real uniforms, incorporating this material into the sculpture (see Figures 29 and 30). Maurice had been on a number of pilgrimages, but he said this last one was special because of the monument, and also because the veterans had been accompanied by a group of young Canadians. "In the cemeteries, they were crying right along with us." I asked Maurice:

**Do you feel like you've got a some kind of a special relationship to Ortona?**

Oh for sure, yeah. As a matter of fact I've always felt, and I've been to Italy I think a total of five or six times, I've always felt that uh, I left something behind. I, I have no reason to think that, but I've always wanted to go back. But after this trip I feel that uh, I don't have to go back anymore. You know, it's just put a real good closure on it, and, for whatever reason, I couldn't really answer that, but uh, I don't know, I feel comfortable now, sort of thing. Strange, but that's the way it is.

Maurice felt closure, but he was not sure why. "Strange." His own feeling that he had left something behind in Ortona did not make sense to him: "I have no reason to think that". But he felt "comfortable now" and no more need to go back. What could it be that had made him feel reconciled? Perhaps his last trip was special because of the new monument? Or because the veterans were accompanied by youth, who shared their tears in the cemeteries? Was it these acts of public recognition and shared remembrance that had finally redressed Maurice's mysterious loss?

During the evening that I spent with Maurice, I was moved by his interest in telling me about his memories of his father and of the circumstances of his youth, growing up very poor on a farm on the prairies, one of sixteen children in his family. He described himself as "real

ignorant" and a "hillbilly" and laughed at himself without pretence or bitterness. Now he lived in a modest yet comfortable suburban bungalow. We sat on the sofa in the living room with wall to wall carpet, a glass coffee table, and a tv set on a bookshelf with many books. Maurice's wife had left a pot of tea and biscuits on the coffee table and left us alone to talk. Maurice's bright eyes and musical voice made it easy to imagine him still as the simple country boy that he remembered he had been.

My dad was in the First World War, in the artillery. And, you know we, well he didn't talk about it very much but, you know I felt I should at least do my part. I felt like I was doing the right thing.

**Did it still feel like that when you were in Italy?**

Uh, yes and no. You know, when I was in Italy during battles and that, man, you know I felt like a little kid that had got lost. I really did, you know. And cause I was just a kid, and uh I was raised, like I said I was raised at Grassland I had, had no idea what the big world was like at all you know just, like a hillbilly you might say, really. Yeah, yeah I still felt patriotic but I was still scared, scared, man, just, you can't believe how scared you can get and still, your heart'll still beat.

**What's it like, how do you deal with that kind of**

I don't know. Really don't know because many many many times you know I felt that, that I was so afraid that my heart would just, just explode. That's the way I felt. But what can you do? There's nowhere you can go. And, the thing doesn't change from day to day to day to day from night to night just, you're just scared to death, I mean really to the point you think that you should just die from fright. And really there's no way that I or anybody else could explain it to somebody that didn't experience it and have them feel exactly the way it is, it's just not, not possible. Cause you wouldn't believe that you could get that, be that afraid and still not die of a heart attack.

**And is that, is that what Ortona was like?**

Oh yeah for sure. The only, we've had a lot, a lot of real hard battles you know but they last hours and it's over and you get some relief, but in Ortona it was like that for seven days and seven nights, it didn't stop. Not at all. I don't even

remember sleeping.

I asked Maurice for more details about the battle. I was wondering what was special about it for him.

Well I had, like you say I had a series of jobs, just busting, blowin holes through the wall to wall or, or, backing somebody up if he had to dart across the street or from one alley to the other, you know, somebody's gotta be there to, to start firing down at, even at nothing. I mean you fire, you don't necessarily have to see something you just start shootin down the street sort of thing, or wherever they're shooting from in hopes that you can keep their head down while somebody makes their move.

Near the end of the interview, I asked Maurice a general question ("Do you talk to people much about the war?") that prompted him to think about the ways that he talked (or did not talk) about his war experience. In his answer, he shared something new with me about his experience of Ortona that he had not mentioned when I was asking direct questions about the battle itself. This was a story of shooting and killing a German. It was clearly an important experience, and the fact that Maurice had not mentioned it earlier is a signal that he was accustomed to suppressing it in order to avoid the associated emotional pain (BenEzer 1999). Notice that in his earlier talk about shooting during the battle, he had merely said: "I mean you fire, you don't necessarily have to see something". Not necessarily – but it became clear that he did see something, and his decision to tell me about it may have come about because I prompted him to reflect on his experience of talking about his memories. Notice in the passage below that Maurice began to describe once again his fear of crying; then he realized that he was not having that feeling now, and he went on to argue (and perhaps convince himself of) his belief that in any case men (in particular, veterans)

should not allow their fear of crying to prevent them from sharing their experiences.

**Do you talk to people much about, about the war?**

Uh, not intentionally, no. Like you know, like if somebody ask me questions like you yourself or, but uh, I don't uh, I don't rehash it a lot, with our friends even you know because uh, I tend to get pretty emotional sometimes, and I'm surprised that I haven't tonight. It uh, generally I do and I, I think maybe this is probably a reason of a lot of veterans don't want to talk about the war, for the simple fact that they, they're maybe afraid that they might break down. You know a man doesn't, some men don't feel that they should cry. And I don't feel that way but it still uh, I'm sure that's why a lot of soldiers, ex soldiers don't talk about their experiences.

Maurice paused for a moment, perhaps thinking about experiences that could make him or others cry. Then he continued with a story:

The only thing that really, really got me was on Christmas Day in Ortona I was out, right up in the eve, eve of a house and I had a couple a bricks knocked out, and I was watching out there all day. That's where I had my Christmas dinner was up in the perch there. And uh, a German took cover, ran out and, and then, so I got my rifle ready and another guy come out and I shot him, and uh, you know, and then it, it started to bother me, you know, shootin a guy on Christmas Day. Yeah, so that was a terrible thing, I, I don't like, I still don't like that, it bothers me.

**Really.**

Yeah. So, that's, really that's the only guy I can say I shot... Cause ninety-nine times out of a hundred you're just shootin at, uh, well once in a while you'll see em running across, you know, trying to get out of there, but generally you're shootin at smoke from a machine gun, or movement in, you know, the grass or whatever.

**But I guess you got a good, that was the one guy. Where was that, was that in a street, or**

It was in, over, they were in a square, just a little square. That square's no longer

there. I found that last, last time I was in Ortona, I found that house. But the square was all filled up with other houses. I didn't, I didn't go into the house but I walked around back and it was all built up... I'd tried five years ago and I couldn't find it. But this time I found it. [...] I just walked around to see if the square was still there, behind it, but it wasn't. All new buildings.

This had not been part of Maurice's main story of the battle. He had told me other, detailed stories of the battle associated with fear, close calls with death, and anger at his officer who in Maurice's opinion was risking both their lives by "trying to be a hero". This story of shooting the German was the only specific story that involved Maurice using his rifle and attempting (as it happens, successfully) to kill the enemy. Was this story an afterthought, something less important to Maurice than the details he told me first? That cannot be; the experience was important enough to him that he had searched for the scene of the event a number of times on previous trips to Ortona. It was clearly very significant, but he had been reluctant to share it – not only with me, but also in the article that he wrote for his regimental journal about his most recent trip to Ortona. He gave me a copy of this article (M. White 1999) at the conclusion of our meeting. In the article, he writes about the Price of Peace monument.<sup>14</sup> He writes about the visits to the cemeteries, and the young Canadians who accompanied the veterans and cried along with them.<sup>15</sup> He does not mention finding the place in Ortona that he had looked for without success on past pilgrimages. His article concludes:

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14 "I personally was most emotional at the unveiling of the Price Of Peace monument in Ortona. I was honored to help perform this duty. There were many civilians in attendance and their eyes were filled with tears" (M. White 1999:77).

15 "Throughout the trip the Youth of Canada personnel were all most helpful and comforting to every one of us veterans. Whenever they would see any of us having trouble emotionally they would not hesitate to come over and give us a hug and a pat on the back" (M. White 1999:78).

The Pilgrimage makes me feel that everything is complete now. I do not feel that I have to return to find whatever it was that was left behind (78).

Maurice professed not to know why he felt this way. If we did not know the hidden story about shooting the German, we might think that the source of his new-found feeling of completion was either the Price of Peace monument, or the youth accompaniment for the pilgrimage. What seems more likely is that Maurice achieved this sense of closure and comfort because he successfully returned to the place where he had shot the German. Notice how Maurice explained his issue of closure in terms of an effort to find something: "I do not feel that I have to return to find whatever it was that was left behind". He did not make the direct connection, but in our conversation, the one thing that he had mentioned finding in Ortona was the house where he had shot the German: "I found that last, last time I was in Ortona, I found that house.... I'd tried five years ago and I couldn't find it. But this time I found it". It seems clear that Maurice no longer felt troubled by what he had "lost" in Ortona because, this time, he had finally "found" it.

It strikes me that Maurice had been making efforts to return to the place of one of his most troubling memories. He had tried to go back, to find it, on past pilgrimages. Finally, this time, he had succeeded. This was a private, personal effort by Maurice. It was not organized for him, he did not have the aids to memory that are available (such as gravestones) in the war cemetery; no monument; no youth accompaniment. He did this alone, and when he wrote his article, he either did not want to share it with others, or he did not think that others would be interested. This was an act of remembrance for Maurice, but it was an act that was not modeled for him in any of the books or traditional practices

associated with Canadian war remembrance.

Furthermore, Maurice did not seem to fully recognize the significance that his effort at remembrance held for himself. He could tell me that he had looked for this place for many years; he could tell me that he had finally found it on his last trip; but he did not seem to connect any of this up as a possible answer to the questions that he asked himself about what he had left behind in Ortona and why he had recently found closure. The public forms of remembrance did not offer Maurice any help in understanding his own personal efforts to find meaning and reconciliation, and they may even have prompted him to suppress that effort and understanding – to hide it from others, and even to hide it from himself.

And why would he want to return to the place where he had killed the German?

Perhaps it was to show that it mattered, that he cared; to show this to the unknown German soldier and to himself. There was no one to ask forgiveness, but perhaps the effort to find the house and the square was Maurice's way of trying to make himself worthy of it. He lacked any public discourse that would help him to articulate and comprehend his effort, but he performed the effort nonetheless.

### **Mirroring the Monument: Maurice's New Main Story**

In the years since our interview, it appears that Maurice has embraced what had previously been a hidden story, and made it his main one. In November 2004, contrary to his expectation at the time of our interview, Maurice did go back to Ortona as part of another VAC pilgrimage. At one point during the pilgrimage, the reporter for *Legion Magazine* found Maurice seated in the hotel lobby with some of the youth, making a point of telling

them a story:

"I have a sad story to tell you. If tears start to come, forgive me." Former lance-corporal Maurice White, 79, of Edmonton, is talking with several Canadian teenagers.... "On Christmas Day they brought our lunch to us—beef, mashed potatoes, gravy and a bottle of beer—and my outpost was up in the attic of a house. I'd knocked two bits out and I sat there all day on a rafter, looking out this hole. Some Germans came out, and I actually shot one of them on Christmas Day."

White holds back tears.... "I thought, 'What the hell did I do that for?' It damn near makes me cry every time I talk about it, but it's important to know that we do have feelings and (the Germans) were people, too." The teenagers listen silently (Salat 2005).

Maurice was still concerned about crying, but nevertheless he made a point of telling his story about killing the German to a group of teenagers on the pilgrimage. Some years later, Maurice told the story again to *Maclean's* magazine, and in doing so, he shared a new detail:

I shot a German on Christmas Day. At the time, it didn't bother me. But ever since, you know, I thought, "Why did I do that?" It was Christmas. But you don't have a choice, you either shoot somebody or they shoot you. When I shot him, he fell, and two German soldiers came out and grabbed him and I didn't shoot back. I thank God that I didn't because that would have been even worse to handle (Gohier 2010).

The new detail is that Maurice also witnessed the German soldier's comrades try to come to his aid. Thus, we learn now that the scene that Maurice witnessed on Christmas Day 1943 was a sort of mirror image of the Canadian Price of Peace monument. In Maurice's case, in contrast to the monument, the mortally wounded soldier and his comrade were German

instead of Canadian, and Maurice was responsible for their suffering. There was no monument to support Maurice's memory of this scene, but he had found the site where it would be in Ortona, and he had transformed his Christmas Day 1943 experience from a story that he preferred to hide into a story that he was determined to tell.

### **The Road Home**

In this dissertation, I have shown that Canadian war remembrance is a discourse that frames war as a sacrifice and abandons killing to a domain of insignificance. This discourse is represented as "in tune" with war veterans, and it sends Canadian youth for "affective attunement" through pilgrimages to Ortona and elsewhere. What I have shown in my analysis of interviews with Ortona veterans is the dissonance between Remembrance discourse and many of the veterans' narratives. Contrary to the indifference promoted by Remembrance, Ortona veterans whom I spoke to were profoundly affected by the issue of killing, even when they did not know if they had killed.

There were times when I was driving home from Edmonton to Toronto, across the prairie and through the vast boreal forest, that I thought of Maurice's words.

I went with the company commander a lot, we used to go out and do some, wherever we could do some reconnoitring to see if we could better our position [...]

#### **How did you keep from getting lost?**

Well, maybe that's why they sent me. You know, I was raised in the bush and uh, I can find my way anywhere, cause I have a good sense of direction and a keen sense of observing things so I'll know where they're at.

**Did that come in handy during Ortona?**

It come in handy anywhere during the war. Cause you can see something without even looking at it. Like you might be looking here and there's some movement over here and you'll pick it up, automatically pick it up, whereas the people that didn't have the uh, experience that I had hunting, and I credit this to hunting, uh, would not see that movement. Even today, like we go on hikes out in the country and uh, have ten or fifteen people, if there's a moose or a deer or anything, I'll see it first, way before, the others won't even see it. And I think that was taught to me by my father, I used to do a lot of hunting with my father, you know, when I was a kid. And it just stays with you all your life.

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## Appendix A: Chronology of the Revitalization of Remembrance, 1994-2012

- 1994 The Canadian government and VAC launch the Canada Remembers program to encourage commemoration of the 50th anniversary (1995) of the end of WWII.
- 1995 As part of the 50th anniversary commemoration of WWII, the Canadian government declares the week preceding Remembrance Day to be Veterans Week and suggests it is a time for Canadians to reflect on the "achievements and sacrifice" of our war veterans. Veterans Week becomes an annual event promoted by VAC.
- 1997 National Vimy Memorial is declared a National Historic Site.
- 1998 Controversy over the Canadian War Museum's plan for a Holocaust gallery.  
  
Highway 416 is named Veterans Memorial Highway.
- 1999 The Legion increases the moment of silence in its Remembrance Day ceremonies from one minute to two minutes, and launches a campaign for a Two-Minute Wave of Silence across Canada on Remembrance Day. This restores the original practice of two minutes of silence which had been reduced to one minute in the 1950s. The Two-Minute Wave of Silence is promoted by VAC, provincial and municipal governments.
- 2000 Construction of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the base of the National War Memorial in Ottawa. The body of an unknown Canadian WWI soldier is exhumed from his grave in France and reburied in the Tomb. The Tomb is an initiative of the Legion, funded by the federal government. A new Remembrance Day practice develops: at the conclusion of the ceremony on Remembrance Day, the crowd in attendance approaches the Tomb and people lay their poppies on it.  
  
The *Canvas of War* exhibit opens at the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. This exhibit showcases paintings from the Canadian military's official war art program of WWI and WWII that had rarely been displayed due to the limited space of the old War Museum. *Canvas of War* tours Canada until 2005, when the paintings are installed in the newly constructed War Museum.  
  
Veterans Affairs conducts a major Commemorative Review Project to review its practices and plan future Remembrance policy.
- 2001 In its first Five-Year Strategic Plan, VAC suggests that war commemoration has a "tremendous potential to contribute in a positive way to a celebration of Canada's national identity and the education of Canadian youth" (VAC 2001:18).

VAC launches its Battlefield Memorials Restoration Project that will spend \$30 million over the next five years to restore major war memorials, particularly the memorial at Vimy Ridge.

The Dominion Institute launches its Memory Project Speakers Bureau and Archive.

National Aboriginal Veterans Monument is erected in Ottawa.

The Royal Canadian Mint releases the new Remembrance and Peacekeeping ten dollar bill.

2002 The government of Canada adopts a Remembrance Policy that defines Remembrance and commits the government to promoting it. The Policy also creates an Advisory Council to coordinate the Remembrance activities of different government departments and agencies.

VAC begins its partnership with Encounters with Canada, providing funding for new youth programs on Remembrance.

VAC develops a Canada Remembers Youth Strategy "to identify opportunities for learning initiatives, events, and materials that encourage and stimulate the engagement of Canada's youth in Remembrance activities" (VAC 2003:33).

The Commemoration Program of VAC is rebranded the Canada Remembers Program.

2003 In a seven month project, called the Meaning of Remembrance Project, VAC, the Legion, Canadian Heritage, the Dominion Institute, Cadets Canada, the Canadian War Museum and Encounters with Canada work "to develop one set of key messages, targeted at youth aged twelve to seventeen, which will enable the partners involved to use a common approach in conveying key Remembrance messages to all Canadians" (VAC 2003:33).

VAC conducts an international assessment of its educational programming in comparison to similar Remembrance pedagogies in the UK, USA and Australia.

Parliament passes the Vimy Ridge Day Act declaring April 9 Vimy Ridge Day.

Monument to Canadian Korean War veterans (the Monument to the Fallen) is erected in Ottawa.

2004 VAC and Heritage Canada partner with the Historica Foundation to create 8 "Heritage Minutes" television broadcasts on aspects of Canadian military history.

VAC partners with Scouts Canada to make Remembrance a "key element of merit".

- VAC creates Heroes Remember, an online archive of war veterans' testimony. From 2004 to 2006 the number of testimonies increases from 800 to 1,700.
- 2005 The Canadian government declares this The Year of the Veteran (at the suggestion of the Legion). The 60th anniversary of the end of WWII is observed.
- The Canadian War Museum relocates to a new, much larger, and dramatically designed building, and is given the address 1 Vimy Place.
- 2006 VAC begins its Community Engagement Partnership Fund and its Cenotaph/Monument Restoration Program to provide financial support to local Remembrance initiatives across Canada.
- VAC opens a European Operations Division whose aim is to expand "the overseas 'face' and 'reach' of Canadian remembrance... to give Canada a highly visible and well-respected presence in an area of the world where commemoration is actively embraced" (VAC 2007:17-18).
- The Valiants Memorial is created in Ottawa. The memorial comprises nine busts and five statues of significant figures of Canadian military history since early colonial times.
- 2007 The 90th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge is celebrated across Canada and at the newly-restored Canadian National Memorial in France. 5,000 Canadian youth make a pilgrimage to attend the celebration at Vimy along with veterans, Canadian Forces members, the Prime Minister, foreign dignitaries, and Queen Elizabeth II (who rededicates the monument).
- Highway 401 from Trenton to Toronto is named Highway of Heroes.
- 2008 VAC begins a corporate partnership with the Canadian Football League to hold Remembrance-themed events during CFL playoff games.
- 2009 VAC begins a corporate partnership with the TV music channels Much Music and Musique Plus to promote Veterans Week.
- Toronto City Centre Airport is renamed Billy Bishop Toronto City Airport in honour of Bishop, a Canadian WWI "flying ace" and Victoria Cross recipient. The name change is also intended to honour "all veterans and members of the Canadian Armed Forces" who "put their lives on the line for Canadian values and the defence of others" (Toronto Port Authority 2009).
- 2012 The Royal Canadian Mint releases the new Vimy Ridge-themed 20 dollar bill.