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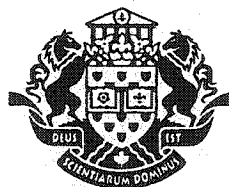
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The Silver Cross Mother – A Canadian Martyrology

by

Suzanne Evans

Dissertation presented

**In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies**

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Department of Classics and Religious Studies

University of Ottawa

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Abstract

This dissertation compares the stories of mothers of martyrs from many different religious traditions with those of Canadian mothers who were willing to send their sons to war during World War One. Over the years in the Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Sikh traditions stories have been written, repeated, dramatized and painted of mothers who were supportive of their children's martyrdom. Between 1914 and 1918 the Canadian mothers of young men found themselves living in a world in which war was increasingly described in the religious language of sacrifice. This is evident from an examination of the newspapers, magazines, novels and poetry of the day as well as words from the politicians and the chaplains. It was within this environment and using these same media, that mothers were often depicted as offering the sacrifice of their sons for the cause of civilization, justice, truth and god. In Canada after the war the image of the proud, but mournful bereaved mother served to commemorate the battle and provide it with purpose and meaning in a world which had had its belief systems shaken to the core.

The images of mothers of martyrs and heroes from long ago, from World War One and from present times are all designed to have a lasting and powerful influence over public opinion, drawing supporters to the cause. This historical analysis shows how the poignant mother-child relationship has been used by leaders of states and religious communities in conflict situations as well as the mothers themselves to gain support for war. In all cases the key element in the role of the mother of the sacrificed is her acceptance of the necessity to offer her child and for this she is compensated in a variety of ways including the receipt of the Memorial Cross, or as it is better known, the Silver Cross medal.

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Introduction: Heroes and Martyrs

In the recent Irish film *Some Mother's Son* (1996) the role of the mother of a martyr is depicted in modern terms making the mother's choice to sacrifice her son or not, seem realistic and compelling.¹ This is a tale of two educated middle-class mothers whose sons fight in the Irish Republican Army (IRA), are imprisoned for their actions, and end up going on a hunger strike. One mother decides to keep her son alive while the other chooses to let her son die. The latter choice is one that mothers have made in times of conflict for thousands of years. This is the image of the mother of martyrs, sometimes silent and other times vocal, but in the end supporting the decision of her child to risk death in the fight for a cause held dear.²

This dissertation shines a spotlight on the role of the mother of the sacrificed within communities in conflict. Here, through their side-by-side placement, the stories of the mothers from different times, places, conflicts and religious traditions can be seen for the first time as falling into a pattern. To date, the histories of select mothers of the past have been remembered and honoured by their communities and their leaders in proportion to the perceived need to support and develop a sense of patriotism and, if necessary, militarism. Commonly this remembrance has been done in isolation from the stories of mothers of martyrs from other cultures and religious communities, which helps to promote a sense of uniqueness about the mothers of such a culture who are willing to make this sacrifice. This

¹ The film depicts the incidents leading to the martyrdom of Bobby Sands, the IRA fighter who went on a hunger strike in 1981 while in prison to achieve the status of "political prisoner" for incarcerated members of the IRA. The title "Some Mother's Son" is taken from a song on the Kinks album "Arthur, or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire" (1969). The song tells of a mother's son who is killed in the trenches during World War One.

² A discussion regarding the concept of martyrdom will follow in Chapter One.

study will dispel the notion of uniqueness, showing that whether we remember these mothers or not and whether we are impressed or appalled by their stories, in a wide variety of cultures including Canadian, mothers have been commonly called upon to accept the sacrifice of their children when the society understands itself to be under extreme danger. After developing a general picture of mothers of martyrs, the focus of this dissertation will be on an historical analysis of the Canadian mothers of World War One, the language of sacrifice surrounding them, their stories, and how their role has been commemorated.

The only previous scholarly work done on the analysis of the role of the mother of martyrs concerns Palestinian mothers. Social anthropologist Julie Peteet (1993) mentions briefly the power emanating from the public role of the mothers in modern-day Palestinian society. Najjar and Warnock (1992) conducted an interview with the mother of the first female martyr of the Intifada (1987-91) and Philippa Strum (1992) recorded a conversation she had with a mother of a martyr in studies of the Palestinian refugee camps at the same time.³ Within the Canadian context the work of historian Jonathan Vance on the mythology of heroic sacrifice present in Canada during World War One has provided useful reflections. Although he does not focus on the role of women in his book *Death So Noble* (2000), he does discuss the importance of the role of the soldiers' mothers in Canada's memory of the war (pp.147-151). According to Vance, the two characteristics which stand out when considering the image of the Canadian soldier in World War One are "his youth and his attachment to a mother figure" (2000:147). He tells us that the Mother Britain school of Canadian literature was an important element in the development of the prevailing myth of the war which emphasized Canada's devotion and fidelity to the

memory of its founders. The stress on this fidelity of the son coupled with the appeal to Canadian mothers to act as “recruitment officers” for the cause helped to maintain enlistment. Considering the importance of the role of the mother to the war effort it is surprising to find such a paucity of analysis on them as well as the mothers of martyrs from other times and religious traditions. This dissertation aims to begin filling that gap.

There are many stories of modern-day martyrs from around the world. Palestinians, Israelis, Iranians, Salvadorans, Sikhs and many other heroes of their people are presented as willing to die for a homeland and the political right to speak freely. After September 11, 2001, as our media filled with images and words of the Taliban, the tales of other recent martyrs from around the world receded for a time or, as in the case of the Palestinians and Israelis, were circumscribed by the words of Osama Bin Laden. Even before the destruction of September 11, 2001 *The New York Times Magazine* ran a story which spoke of the desire of every young Palestinian boy interviewed at a school in the Gaza Strip to be a martyr (Finkel 2000: 37). This is an attitude many Canadians find difficult to understand and from this perspective these would-be martyrs are seen in just the same way as Lucian viewed the early Christians: “A fanatical species enamored of death,” he noted, “who ran to the cruelest tortures as to a feast” (Klausner 1987: 237).

Part of the reason we find it so challenging to understand the current desire for martyrdom is that we have a difficult time producing heroes in this land, let alone martyrs. In a recent book entitled *Great Questions of Canada*, Charlotte Gray and Peter Newman (2000) answer the question “where have all the heroes gone?” Their responses deal with both the emotional and geographical makeup of Canadians. With a dry wit Newman states:

³ These sources provided some of the ground for my MA thesis and a subsequent article, “Mothers of Martyrs:

“If God had meant us to be heroic, he wouldn’t have made us Canadians” (2000:87). He backs up this statement with a fact which says as much about his Canadian sense of self-deprecating humour as it does about how Canadians view their heroes: “Ottawa has actually struck three Canadian medals for bravery – our own versions of the Victoria Cross, the Star of Military Valour and the Medal of Military Valour,” but, he quips, “none has ever been awarded” (2000:87). These medals, although nearly a decade old, are only awarded during war-time. Thus, the lack of recipients says nothing of Canadian bravery and everything of the state of relative peace in which Canadians live.

Charlotte Gray explains that it is not just that we have “no idol industry here” (2000:83). The reason “we do heroes badly” is because we have a stronger understanding of our regions than of our nation. But for much of English Canada, World War One re-configured our sense of regions and made us look more towards the nation for our heroes. In the Great War we too exhibited a kind of madness or fanaticism which parallels the structure and intensity of the stories of martyrs who have died for causes in other lands. Alan Young has written of the mythology of heroic sacrifice during World War One in Canada and compares the “high diction,” or, as Bertrand Russell called it, “the foul literature of glory” with “the rhetoric of martyrdom and sacrifice employed by Muslim fundamentalists in the war between Iran and Iraq” (1990:21). This tells of a wide-spread sentiment within Canada today in which, when Muslims (or almost any explicitly religious group) speak of martyrs and sacrifice, the actors are said to be “fundamentalists.” Just as for the Romans viewing the early Christians, it is the other, willing to die for a cause, who is touched with fanaticism. But the literature of the day was full of examples of supportive

A Palestinian Institution with Judeo-Islamic Roots” (Evans 1999).

stories of noble Canadian mothers willing to sacrifice their heroic sons for an Empire thought to be the Motherland. Much of this literature, as well as the mood of the time, has been forgotten but traces remain. In the main lobby of the House of Commons in Ottawa, for example, are two quotations carved into the walls.⁴ One is well known and is repeated annually in a ritual of remembrance:

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 blow
In Flanders fields.

These words, written by the Canadian soldier-poet John McCrae, have gained fame far beyond Canada's borders and have done a great deal to shape the remembrance of the war. The other quotation comes from a much older source, 2 Maccabees 6:31: "So he died; and by his death he left a heroic example and a glorious memory, not only for the young but also for the great body of the nation." The man referred to in this quote is Eleazar, who was not a typical soldier-hero for he was old and feeble. But the heroism that he exhibited was in the strength and loyalty of his faith to his god and community. In the many stories of the Maccabean martyrs, Eleazar is portrayed as the first to be killed. His example of steadfastness and willingness to die for a cause was followed by another, involving a family of seven brothers. The mother of these boys encouraged her seven sons to stand firm behind their beliefs in the face of certain death. She watched as each one was slowly tortured to death.

⁴ The quotations are found on either side of a statue of Lieutenant-Colonel Baker, the only Member of Parliament to be killed in World War One.

Since this depiction of the Maccabean mother, there have been many other mother of martyr figures included in martyrologies and remembered for their maternal sacrifice. In recent cases of Iranian mothers during the Iran–Iraq war and the Palestinian mothers of martyrs of the Intifada, this remembrance took the form of official recognition and remuneration. Canadian mothers are also offered governmental recognition for their sacrifice. The Memorial Cross, better known as the Silver Cross, was first instituted on December 1, 1919 and was awarded as a “memento of personal loss and sacrifice on the part of the mother and widow of a sailor or soldier of Canada or Newfoundland who laid down his life for his country during World War One” (P.C. 1976-2724, p.2). Although officially wives are included amongst its recipients, it is the mothers who are most famous. This is especially evident each year on November 11 when the “Silver Cross Mother” lays a wreath at the National War Memorial in Ottawa in the name of all Canadian mothers who have lost children in war and more recently in efforts for peace.

Despite the similarities between the martyrologist’s presentation of the mother of martyrs and the public view of the Silver Cross Mother, it seems quite a stretch to equate these two roles. After all, we are a country which produces soldiers not martyrs to fight in our wars. Nevertheless, I show that it is much less of a stretch than one would first imagine. Both mothers of martyrs and Silver Cross mothers share the essential characteristic of their acceptance of the necessity to offer their children for sacrifice. This acceptance is the truly compelling and powerful aspect of the story, for if the mother, of all people, can support the giving of her child’s life to a cause, then not only must the cause be of ultimate worth, but it would be shameful for anyone else to give less. The trait of the mother’s acceptance to offer her most precious possession is paralleled at the death of her son when once again she must

accept death quietly, if during the war, so as not to damage the morale of others in the battle, and if after the war, so as not to damage the peace or amnesty which the state then supports.

The ability of the mother to influence and recruit others to her cause rests heavily on a particular understanding of the strength of a mother's love for her child. The nature of parental love and its relationship with cultures and historical periods has provided fertile ground for debate. Historical examples of child sacrifice and abandonment have been taken as indicating that the feeling, be it called mother love, "nature," or "instinct" is dependent on culture and historical accident rather than inborn. However, Shari Thurer argues in her book, *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother*, that those examples of child neglect or infanticide point to societal misogyny as their cause rather than a lack of caring (1994:6). She believes that mother love is a "stubborn, hardy emotion" for at base

attachment to one's children is usual in ordinary, decent circumstances. Any human being in his or her right mind, when presented with a helpless infant, will tend to provide for its care rather than kill it, eat it, or ignore it. Mother love, though it is vulnerable to environmental manipulation, seems to be a fact (1994:6).

As the title of her book suggests, different cultures at different times can augment or diminish the power of the "fact" of mother love. The image we now have of the mother in much of the Western world bloomed in the modern era. With the Industrial Revolution sex roles became exaggerated as the male moved from the home-based industries out to the public factories and the female remained in the home. The idea of the "noble" mother presiding over the home and doting over her children as the centre and meaning of her life, reached a high point during the Victorian era and held sway into the early twentieth century

and World War One.⁵ The platform which history provided the mothers of World War One ensured that their stories of sacrifice would be told often and widely with enthusiasm for their great honour and nobility. Although war will always exaggerate the differences in the spheres of men and women, the passion for this kind of tale would eventually wane as the gap between the roles of mothers and fathers lessened.

The Canadian sources used in the dissertation to elucidate the image of the mothers and the mood of the times include newspapers and journals such as the *Winnipeg Free Press*, *The Evening Tribune* (Winnipeg), *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The Globe* (Toronto), *Saturday Night* (Toronto) and *Everywoman's World* (Toronto), a journal geared towards educated, middle-class women. English speakers were most supportive of the war because of their close ties to England. From the beginning of the war in August 1914, the Canadian press presented it as a battle for the British Empire.⁶ The recruitment of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, although executed by the Dominion Department of Militia, was designed and organized by the British War Office (Bray180:143).⁷ As well, most of the first battalion to be raised in Canada, The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, was made

⁵ Many "how-to" books of conduct were published during the Victorian era, designed to teach women how to accomplish the task of being a noble mother. It is with these ideas that the mothers of the soldiers would have been brought up. An often reprinted (from 1833-55) and popular example is *The Mother at Home or, The Principles of Maternal Duty* (1833) by Reverend John S.C. Abbott. This book, like others of its kind, attempted to reconcile Christian doctrine with the everyday life of a mother. One book, by Rev. Charles B. Hadduck, took this task even more seriously and attempted, as its title suggests, to educate mothers on how to prepare their children for life in heaven: *Christian Education: Containing Valuable Practical Suggestions in the Training of Children for Usefulness and Heaven* (n.d.).

⁶ R.M. Bray surveyed articles published in early August 1914 from thirty-five newspapers from across the country and concluded that there was "little difference between Liberal and Conservative newspapers, between French and English journals, or between the press in western, central, and eastern Canada" – they all understood Canadian participation in the war as a support for Britain rather than Canada fighting as her own nation (Bray 1980:43).

⁷ Jonathan Vance tempers Bray's claim that the British War Office held full responsibility for the organization of the Canadian recruitment campaign by noting that powerful members of the public could apply to raise battalions on their own, thus moving away from the British system of militia-based recruiting (personal communication December, 2002).

up of men born in England. Just as one would expect considering these ties, supportive stories in English of noble mothers willing to sacrifice their heroic sons for an Empire thought to be the “mother” land were prevalent at the time.

But long before Canada was even part of an Empire, there were stories of mothers of martyrs being created in other parts of the world. Chapter One presents a collection of these tales from Jewish, Christian, Islamic and Sikh traditions and shows that an archetypal image of the mothers can be determined from these historical instances. Some classic examples of women who have filled this role are the Maccabean mother of seven sons, Mary, mother of Jesus, Fatima, mother of Husayn, and Mata Gujari, grandmother of Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh. It is necessary to clarify the archetypal character of the mother of the sacrificed in order to see how later, in Chapter Three, the Silver Cross Mother can be described in terms of this image. The first chapter will also focus on how these stories of the mothers were reused in their traditions, serving to shape the attitudes of future generations of mothers, martyrs and their audiences. As well I will show how more recent communities compensated mothers of martyrs not only by publicly honouring them and repeating their tales, but also through financial means.

Chapter Two examines the images of sacrifice in World War One and how they provided a way for the public to understand the value of the war. Even though the term “martyr” was not commonly applied to the soldiers, there were individuals with considerable influence, such as the Bishop of London, Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, who referred to the soldiers as martyrs. The idea of the soldiers as sacrificial offerings was presented in other forms as well. I take the “language” of sacrifice to be an expression of ideas found in select pieces of the art of the Canadian War Memorial Fund Art Collection,

the cartoons of Louis Raemaekers, the newspapers mentioned above and the propaganda of the time focusing on the martyrology of Edith Cavell and the tale of the Crucified Canadian. The atrocity stories of the war function, as they do in martyrologies, to compel individuals to support the weak and those who have been tortured not only by uniting a community through fear for their own lives, but also by presenting the enemy in terms of ultimate evil. When the depravity of the enemy is described or pictured as equal to that of the devil, then the tenor of the conflict changes. It becomes a cosmic battle of good against evil, a story of war and propaganda over which a religious veil has been draped.

After setting the stage of the times in Chapter Two, I present the stories of the mothers of the soldiers in Chapter Three. Like the mothers of martyrs, the supportive mothers of World War One held the position of honorary recruitment officers. Although no one has analyzed the role of the mothers, I will draw on the ideas of Nicoletta Gullace (1997) who has examined the recruitment actions of the White Feather Campaigners during the war. She discusses how the White Feather women used the power of sexual shame and honour to try to convince men to join the army by pinning white feathers on those they believed were cowardly shirking their military duty. The values of honour and shame are also embedded in the stories of the mothers in their relationships with their sons in both the martyrologies discussed in Chapter One as well as the wartime tales. The stories of the mothers of the soldiers will also be shown to parallel those of the mothers of martyrs by the fact that they received forms of compensation, such as the Silver Cross medal, which served to both honour and recognize their loss as well as helping to maintain their connection to and support for the state.

The final chapters of the dissertation, four and five, examine the image of the mothers of the sacrificed after the war, how they have been depicted and remembered. The fourth chapter looks at how the role of the mother in the war was commemorated in monuments and rituals. One of the most impressive images of a mourning mother is that of "The Spirit of Canada" or, as she is also known, "Mother Canada,"⁸ the largest statue of the Vimy Ridge Memorial. This chapter will not only analyze the artwork of the Vimy Ridge Memorial but also that of the Memorial Chapel of the Peace Tower in front of the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. It will also include a discussion of the Vimy Pilgrimage in 1936 and the development of the rituals of Remembrance Day.

The final chapter looks at the traditional role of the mourning mother in relation to the burial of the dead and how that role was affected by the institution of the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC), which was responsible for the design and maintenance of the graves of over one million Commonwealth soldiers. It also examines the evolution of the Silver Cross Mother from the mother of a wartime soldier to the mother of a peacekeeper.

An important principle, which guided the actions of the IWGC, was that the structures and words used in the cemeteries would promote peace between nations. The atrocity stories that had such currency during the war and the feelings of revenge that they often incited, were to be silenced after the war in the name of amnesty and peace. Nicole Loraux's work (1998) on the Amnesty of Athens of 403 BCE describes amnesty as a ban on the recollection of misfortune to be used as an exit from the endless cycle of retaliation for

⁸ The "Spirit of Canada" and "Canada mourning" are expressions used to describe this sculpture in Hundevad (1936:71,2). "Mother Canada" is a colloquial term found in present day media. "The Spirit of Canada" was also the title of a sculpture done in 1917 by Frances Loring which stood on the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition, Toronto. In the same year Loring and Margaret Scobie completed a sculpture entitled "Miss Canada" which stood outside Eaton's main store, Toronto (Boyanoski 1987:21).

past wrongs. Her theory of the control in ancient Athens over the mothers' mourning of their slain sons will provide guidance for an analysis of the IWGC and the mothers of peace-keepers. No character more poignantly recalls sacrifice than the mother. How she fulfills her role reflects how a society balances conflicting desires for memory -- honouring the slain -- and amnesty -- safekeeping the future.

Those mothers of the war-time who willingly sacrificed their sons for the cause presented a difficult image in the aftermath of World War One when "the war to end all war" was understood with an irony and cynicism which still pervades our views. They appear, to use the expression of the battlefield, "over the top." Although this phrase has come to mean "excessive" or "crazy", during the war it was synonymous with an act of war with which all who fought in the trenches were familiar. In order to make an attack, the troops had to hoist themselves over the wall of sandbags at the front of the trenches, often to face a murderous barrage of machine-gun fire. Gradually for the soldiers and subsequently for the mothers and those back at home, the consistent horror of this kind of warfare became clear and the phrase which had started off as "over the top and the best of luck" was shortened in the obvious absence of luck and the growing appearance of insanity. But what now looks extreme was once seen as a necessary duty to be performed to achieve the desired goal of a free and just civilization. The stories of the mothers willing to sacrifice their sons challenge us to understand the thinking of many of our predecessors in Canada as well as those from other cultures and times and their reasons for going "over the top." This is a challenge to remember our own history in order to understand at least a part of what moves ourselves and others to war but, as it will be shown, remembrance is a two-edged sword and sometimes the path to peace requires a willingness to forget.

Chapter One: The Seeds of the Martyrs

i. Introduction: Martyrdom - Permeable Boundaries; Permanent Challenge

Martyrologies have changed considerably through the centuries to the point where now suicide or homicide bombers are called martyrs by some. These cases raise issues regarding the line between suicide, an act generally unacceptable in religious traditions, and martyrdom; between desiring to kill others and accepting death for oneself. One also wonders how important is the distinction between dying for land and dying for god. Daniel Boyarin, in his recent book *Dying for God* proposes that “we think of martyrdom as a ‘discourse,’ as a practice of dying for God and of talking about it, a discourse that changes and develops over time” (1999:94). Like scholars before him, he is concerned with discovering the origins of the concept in order to arrive at a satisfactory definition. Boyarin’s interest lies with the Jewish and Christian traditions as does that of W.H.C. Frend who, since the publication of his book on martyrdom and the early church in 1965, has been a voice with which to contend on this topic. He argues that martyrdom first began with Judaism, which provided a prototype of the concept later developed in Christianity.⁹ A more recent author on the subject, Glen Bowersock (1995), finds the origins of martyrdom solely within Christianity and its Roman cultural heritage during the early development of the religion.¹⁰ Boyarin agrees that martyrdom began during this period, but within both the Jewish and Christian communities. The defining characteristic of true martyrs is, for

⁹ In Frend’s words, “martyrdom in Judaism remained something of a *Hamlet* without the Prince. However much the Jew might regard the Law as ‘pre-existent’, and ‘the breath of the power of God’, his sufferings on its behalf were in hope and anticipation only. The Law remained God-created and majestic, but impersonal, and for deep-thinking minds an ‘occasion for sin’ rather than a means of salvation” (1965:67).

Boyarin, that they will “suffer torture and death because they are passionately in love with God” (1999:96). Although most martyrologies draw on the power of the divine to ground the validity of their cause, not all have god written into them.¹¹ Other scholars attempting to define martyrdom have referred to the quality Boyarin is concerned with here as “conviction” and oppose it to that attribute held dear in liberal democracies which does not provide the ground upon which martyrs grow, “compromise”.¹² Clearly it is difficult to find agreement on the essential characteristics of a martyr, but Boyarin’s description of martyrdom as a discourse which changes through time puts the interpretive stress on the story and the storyteller. If a tale of a hero is taken up by a community, repeated, added to and the protagonist is given the status and label of “martyr,” it becomes a martyrology to those people.

It may be that some heroes were not granted the status of martyrs until long after their death at a later time when their power was needed to strengthen community pride and cement religious loyalties. Civic leaders now as in the past recognize the usefulness of martyrs in the promotion of causes; similarly, martyrologists will find ways of adapting the ancient format to new scenarios and redrawing lines around issues such as those mentioned above, of suicide, homicide and god. For the purpose of this dissertation I take as martyrologies stories of those individuals who are called martyrs by their followers. These stories are meant to have an influence over the way people think. In this respect I take them to be a form of propaganda for they are designed to make not only believers of the

¹⁰ Bowersock argues that 2 Maccabees does not include the documentation of legal hearings which are a necessary element in making “narratives of resistance to authority and heroic self-sacrifice” into martyrologies (1995:27).

¹¹ An example is that of Bobby Sands referred to above.

¹² See E. Fackenheim (1978) and Lacey Baldwin Smith (1997).

audience, but ones who will in turn support and promote the cause with all their resources including their lives. Tertullian was explicit about this function of a martyrology when he stated that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity.”

Martyrologies from all traditions are meant to be spread as widely as possible and are written to influence friend and enemy alike. From ancient times in Israel the Maccabean martyrs or Akiva were written about, their stories given dramatic readings, transcribed and adapted to new situations. The Christian martyrs of Lyon had their story incorporated into letters and sent to far-away lands. Palestinian martyrs of the Intifadas have posters produced from their photographs to be pasted on the buildings of the refugee camps and videos made of their last words. Paintings of renowned Sikh martyrs undergoing torture adorn Gurdwaras around the world. It is evident in the early martyrologies that the desire to communicate with god is also part of the tale. The act of proving your worth to god, to die in his name, was based on the belief that god was watching, smelling, listening and appreciating being sustained by the love the martyr was showing.¹³ But in more recent martyrologies not many words, if any, are directed to the attention of the divine. The story is meant to propagate the message to friends and foes that the martyr’s cause is that of truth and justice.

In some cases the mother of a martyr will tell the tale of her child’s martyrdom; in other martyrologies she is a silent but prominently visible character. Either way her presence furthers the poignancy of the story, making it a more compelling tale to spread far and wide. This chapter will discuss in more detail how the mother of martyr story works

¹³ The male pronoun is used to refer to god because that is how the divine was described in all of the stories included in this dissertation. If any of the gods had generally been understood to have been female or sexless it

and then present a number of classic martyrologies from different traditions focusing on some of the methods they use to further their message. I will examine stories from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism, all of which have central martyrologies important to the understanding of their traditions. The first mother's story to be told will be that of the Jewish Maccabean mother of seven martyred sons. Her tale will be followed by that of Mary, mother of Jesus, and Fatima, mother of Husayn. Unlike the Maccabean mother who is often described as joyful, the latter two are mothers of sorrow. The next mother's story to be discussed is that of al-Khansa, the poet and mother of four martyred sons, who brings to the role the ideals of a political philosopher. Mata Gujari, the Sikh grandmother of martyrs, extends the role from mother to grandmother and from the Middle East to the Indian sub-continent.

The stories of these mothers will be discussed in light of a selection of propaganda techniques that they use, particularly atrocity stories, which help to enflame the passions of the audience. The utter gruesomeness of the tales ensures that they will be passed on, for martyrologists know that a fascination of this kind is shared and the stories are sure to find a rapt audience. These horror stories are accessible to all regardless of levels of education or literacy. Atrocities also serve to characterize the value of the cause for which the martyr dies and the despicable nature of the enemy. Another common technique used by martyrologists is the repetition of old stories adapted to new times and comparisons of old martyrs with new ones. These practices ensure that messages from history are kept alive and old boundaries of both gender and nation are remembered and in some cases, strengthened.

is likely that the stories of mothers of martyrs, which themselves developed in strongly patriarchal societies,

All of the stories of mothers of martyrs come from patriarchal societies in which women were or are viewed as in need of being defended. The message from these stories is in large part directed at those members of the society who would defend the “weakest” in the group. It is aimed at moving them out of complacency by the unexpected heroism of the women. Jowett and O’Donnell in their book *Propaganda and Persuasion* note the necessity of knowing the target audience of the propaganda, that group of people which will be most useful if it responds favourably to the message (1992:218). In this case the target group is the men whose masculinity is being challenged by the courage shown by the women.

ii. The Power of the Mother of the Sacrificed: Ritual Child Sacrifice

The poignancy of the mother of martyrs lies in the relationship between mother and child. The mother–child bond has often through time and across cultures been pictured as the strongest form of human love. The words of L.M. Montgomery¹⁴ describe the more common view of mothers when considering the topic of martyrdom and their children. After the birth of her first son in 1912 when the Victorian attitudes towards the meaningfulness of motherhood were still at their peak, she wrote:

Motherhood is a revelation from God. In reading tales of the martyrs I have shuddered with horror – and been lost in wonder. How, for instance, could any human being face the prospect of death at the stake for his religion? I knew I could never do it. I would recant anything in the face of such a hideous threat. *Nothing*, I thought, could fortify me to endure it. And now – I know that for the sake of my child I could and would undergo the most dreadful suffering which one human being could inflict on another. To save my child’s life I would go to the stake a hundred times over (Rubio 1987:102).

would be very different.

¹⁴ Although this Canadian novelist was certainly not known for her thoughts on martyrdom, her words are included here with a view to the subsequent chapters of this dissertation which are concerned with Canada during the late nineteenth century and World War One period. The journals of L.M. Montgomery, edited by Rubio and Waterston, are a great source of information about life and attitudes in Canada during the early twentieth century.

The mother of martyr image turns this view of motherhood on its head and therein lies its power to shock the viewer, to take his or her breath away and, the martyrologist hopes, force the question: "What is this cause that could make a mother do such a thing?" The image of a parent sacrificing a child is so powerful that it is not surprising it should become a touchstone, a measure of love and devotion to a cause and the divine.

Stories of child sacrifice have had a long history. Through many times and cultures and during episodes of great duress people have offered their gods their most valuable possessions, assuming that the divine beings will agree with their assessment of value and reply with their own gifts of equal significance. Joyce Salisbury gives a summary of child sacrifice in the ancient Mediterranean world (1997: 50-55). Descriptions from the Bible going back to the ninth century BCE tell of the battle between the Moabites and the Israelites. When the king of Moab saw that he was losing the battle, "he took his firstborn son who was to succeed him, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall" (2 Kings 3:27). Beyond individual heroic cases Salisbury describes the place outside of Carthage where archaeologists found a cemetery containing approximately twenty thousand urns holding the remains of children and animals who had been sacrificed to the gods. "This still sad space, which is filled with layers of rubble, vividly expresses the fears of ancient parents who responded to their deep anxiety about the future by sacrificing their children" (1997:51). Many wrote about this infamous sacrificial ground including Eusebius, Tertullian, Augustine and Plutarch. The latter author described how those who had no children would buy them from poor people. The mothers were not allowed to "utter a single moan or let fall a single tear" (De Lacy and Einarson trans. 1949 2:493). Grief was taken to

be a bad omen that destroyed the positive effect of the sacrifice. Plutarch explains that the consequences of a tear would be the forfeiture of the money that had been paid for the child and the child was nevertheless sacrificed (De Lacy and Einarson trans. 1949 2:493). The most famous case of offering a child for sacrifice within the Abrahamic traditions is that of Abraham and his son Isaac. In the Genesis story Abraham does not say a word of objection to the divine request for his son as a burnt offering. For his unquestioning obedience he, who had such trouble fathering children, is granted the blessing of having offspring “as numerous as the stars of the heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore” (Gen. 22:4 NRSV).¹⁵

iii. The Jewish Maccabean Mother: Earliest Mother of Martyrs

The Maccabean mother, unlike Abraham, was blessed with many sons. The oldest version of her story was told in 2 Maccabees in the late first/early second century BCE. She and her seven sons were arrested and brought in front of King Antiochus who demanded that they eat pork. Upon their refusal the mother was forced to witness the killing of all her sons. Her first son had his tongue cut out, was scalped, mutilated, and roasted. The second was scalped and tortured. The third, fourth, fifth, and sixth were tortured in ways not told and the youngest underwent tortures only described as worse than the others. The mother watched all of this and in the end died (2 Macc. 7).

¹⁵ In the Koranic version of this story, Abraham tells his son Ishmael that he had a dream that he was sacrificing him and asks for his son's thoughts on the matter. The boy responds, with a calmness not found in most children, that Abraham should do as God wills and he hoped that he will be strong (Sura 37:100-13). In this version of the story both father and son go through the initial stages of the sacrificial rite with full knowledge of who was to be the intended victim. As in the Bible, obedience is rewarded.

Not only are the tortures that the boys underwent horrific but the fact that the mother was forced to watch makes it all the worse. The details of what the boys went through are meant to be telling of the character of the pagans and the Jews. The king, and by extension those who follow him, are evil and no better than butchers and worse than that, they are weak for they cannot even control unarmed boys. In contrast, the boys and their mother are strong and loyal to their god. When it came time for the youngest of the Maccabeans to step up, the king offered him not only life but riches if he gave up his “ancestral customs” (7:24). The mother counselled him not to accept the offer relying on her influence as his mother and the respect that he owed her, to convince him to die for his god.

The mother’s story was repeated with variations many times after this, notably in 4 Maccabees, Pesiqta Rabbati 43, Babylonian Talmud (b. Git. 57b), and Midrash Lamentations 1:16. In the two latter versions the mother’s plight is compared with that of Abraham. By speaking of Abraham the authors gave voice to a comparison which would likely have been drawn in the minds of most of the audience anyway, but by making it explicit, they enhanced the story of the mother. Through this framing technique pain is given historical meaning and value. It is not just part of the present layer of the chaos of life. Abraham’s sacrifice was the epitome of tales depicting the passion a parent has for a child and the willingness of the parent to override that passion in the name of god. Through the comparison, the mother’s ordeal is highlighted with the intensity of Abraham’s story. But her situation achieves an even greater pathos from the comparison by increasing the number of sons from one to seven, by the knowledge that for her there was no last-minute

reprieve, and by the fact that this was someone for whom this strength did not come naturally, for she was not a man.¹⁶

For these reasons it is not surprising that the stunning image of the sacrificing mother was powerful enough to cross the boundaries of time to be incorporated in future stories. But there are other features of the story which have added to its popularity and compelling nature. The author of 2 Maccabees did his best stylistically to ensure a long life and a wide audience for his book. He shortened the story and eliminated the statistics from the original five-volume text in order to make his book more accessible and entertaining (2 Macc. 2:24-26). 2 Maccabees is categorized by some as a "Pathetic" history -- a type of history that draws in the reader's emotions through vivid, sensational language and rhetoric as well as presenting women, appreciated for their emotional characters, in starring roles (Goldstein 1983:21). It has also been called a "tragic history" -- a common genre of historiography in the Greek world, which blurred the distinction between the truth of history and the fabulous nature of tragedy (Doran 1981:84).¹⁷ The appeal to emotions was for a moral purpose. Both histories and tragedies created their version of the events to move the audience in directions they believed were worthy (Doran:86).

¹⁶ Robin Darling Young's article "'The 'Woman with the Soul of Abraham': Traditions about the Mother of the Maccabean Martyrs" discusses the philosophical and metaphysical attitudes towards women at the time 2 Macc. was written. She states that "an ancient philosophical commonplace claimed the feminine element in the human constitution to be weaker and more subject to the emotions than the manly, reasonable element" (1991:72 nt.5).

¹⁷ In his book *Temple Propaganda*, Doran points out that Aristotle's separation of history and tragedy was an "aberration, not the norm" (1981:86). Even the historians Herodotus and Thucydides relied on being able to draw on their audience's emotions although they seldom admitted as much (1981:86).

iv. The Joyful Mother Lives On: Repetitions of the Maccabean Mother's Story

The Maccabean mother's story was repeated or obliquely referred to many more times. Just as Abraham's story had lent hers historic and mythical status, so too did reference to her courage augment the significance of future stories. Through time she became known as the "joyful mother of children"¹⁸ and it was this reference to her joy that was repeated in the story of the Hebrew chronicles of Solomon bar Simson from the First Crusade.¹⁹

One of the most dramatic scenes from Solomon bar Simson's chronicle is that of Rachel and her children. When the Christian Crusaders were approaching her city of Mainz to rid it of Jews either through murder or conversion, this young mother killed her four children. She took care to do so in a manner that would make it clear that they were sacrificed not murdered. She caught the blood of her eldest, Isaac, in her sleeve "according to the practice in the ancient Temple sacrificial rite" and ensured that the knife which she used to slit the throats of her two daughters Bella and Madrona had no nicks in it which would have invalidated the sacrifice (Eidelberg 1977:35). Her youngest, Aaron, saw what was happening and begged his mother not to kill him and hid from her. She found him, "drew him out by his feet from under the box where he had hidden and slaughtered him before the Exalted and Lofty God" (1977:36). Rachel was afterwards killed by the Christian crusaders. "Thus she died together with her four children, just as did that other righteous woman with her seven sons, and about them it is written: The mother of the sons rejoices" (1977:36).

¹⁸ She is described as joyful in: Pesiq.R.43, b.Git. 57b and Midr. Lam 1:16. All of these sources are referring to Ps 113:9.

¹⁹ I have confined my comments to the chronicle written between 1140 and 1146 and most commonly ascribed to Solomon bar Simson although scholars suspect more than one author (Eidelburg 1977:15). My quotations from this chronicle are from Eidelberg's translation. It is the longest of the three Hebrew chronicles of the First Crusade.

It is difficult to believe that joy could be associated in any way with these stories. But as seen in the discussion above, the boundaries between history and tragedy are permeable. The authors are trying to sway our thoughts by way of our emotions for a moral purpose. By adding “joy” to the story they are instructing us on how we should feel just as the parents of whom Plutarch wrote were taught not to shed a tear (De Lacy and Einarson trans. 1949 2:493). Having said this, it is also possible to see joy in Rachel’s relief that if not able to provide a faithful Jewish life for her children she was at least able to control their death and save them from an unknown fate at the hands of the marauding Christians.²⁰ More than this she was able to give their death a purpose just as the Maccabean mother had done.

It is well known that the Books of the Maccabees were carried to Palestine by the Christians.²¹ The early Christians were clearly impressed by the martyrs in these stories. Some Christian martyrologies, such as the Martyrs of Lyon, include characters who are modeled after the Maccabean martyrs²² but often the Maccabeans are revered in their own right by the Christians. Some of the Christian versions of the martyrology are found in the

²⁰ A strikingly similar story to Rachel’s surfaced recently, although with a change of place and culture. The Canadian doctor, James Orbinski of the international aid organization, Doctors Without Borders, told of his experiences in Rwanda where parents came to him either begging for or offering to pay to have their children killed before they were captured and put to death by the enemy (CBC Radio One, Ideas Radio Program *Taking a Stand: The Ethic of Intervention* May 30/01:3). Orbinski told this first-hand and very emotional story in the context of a speech calling for people “to speak out against the moral hollowness of political inaction” (2001:6).

²¹ Although the books were brought to Palestine by the Christians from Egypt, William Rueben Farmer points out that we have no way of knowing whether this literature circulated in Palestine during the first century CE prior to its importation (1956:131). However, even without the written documents of either 1 or 2 Maccabees, the history of the Hasmoneans probably survived in oral form (Farmer, 1956:130). As well as the oral tradition there may have been other written texts, now lost, presenting different versions of this story.

²² In the essay “Blandina and Perpetua” (1978) Frend lists quite a number of similarities between 2 Macc. and the Martyrs of Lyon. The advocates for the faithful, Razis in 2 Macc. and Vettius Epagathus for the Christians, both defy the rule of the tyrant. The martyrs in both stories disregard the pain of torture and because of this behavior they are able to defeat the strength of the tyrant. Frend takes these similarities to show that the earlier book is a source for the Christian martyrology.

writings of John Chrysostom, Origen, Cyprian, Augustine and Gregory of Nazianzus (Winslow 1974:78-9).

The Church Father, Origen (c. 185- c. 254) provides an interesting example of a Christian referring to the Maccabeans. In his *Prayer and Exhortation to Martyrdom* written in 235 CE to his two friends awaiting death in prison, the examples he used as the ultimate models of martyrdom were the Maccabeans. He never acknowledged a difference of religious traditions but said merely: "What dead person could be more deserving of praise than he who of his own choice elected to die for his religion?" (1954:126). The historical details of the religion of the martyrs may have been left aside, but the story of the martyrs lived on. The ancient image provided a way to understand the bitter days. If the story is repeated often enough then people will begin to believe it and what is more important, they will believe that the characters provide an admirable model to follow.

v. The Mothers of Sorrow: Introducing Mary and Fatima

Although the image of the Maccabean mother lived on in Christianity, the most famous mother of a martyr in that tradition, Mary, did not carry with her the joy of the earlier mother. Both Mary, mother of Jesus, and the Islamic Fatima, the mother of Husayn, stand in contrast to the Maccabean mother with respect to the position they hold in their traditions. Mary, "The Queen of Heaven," and Fatima, "The Shining One," are the immaculate female members of the holy family. They differ from the Maccabean mother in another fundamental way, they are mothers who express an intense and timeless sorrow at their sons' death. Mary is called "The Mother of Sorrows," while Fatima lives in the "House of Sorrows" in Paradise, continuously weeping until the Day of Judgement when

her son's murderers will come to justice. The devastating sadness from which these two women suffer envelops their characters to such an extent that the joy written into the story of the Maccabean mother is for the most part overshadowed. In both Christianity and Islam that same sense of joy is instead attributed directly to the martyrs. The strength of Mary and Fatima comes not with a defiant joy but is portrayed in their acceptance of the responsibility of raising a child who will be sacrificed. Living through this experience gives them the status for which they are respected as emotional confidants and intercessors.

This section will examine how Mary was represented in her attitude towards her son's death and will be followed by a discussion of Fatima and her son. A particularly effective way in which both traditions were able to convey the story of their central martyr figures, and the attending interpretation of history, was through drama. The medieval Christian dramatic productions of the passion plays are paralleled in the Shi'ite traditions by the *ta'ziya* -- the re-enactments of Husayn's martyrdom -- which have a history dating back to the tenth century. In the Christian and Shi'ite world these dramatizations of martyrdoms and their related stories at the core of the traditions were very popular forms of entertainment. But their goal was to do more than entertain; it was to educate the public in matters of faith and inspire an emotional response. The Christian passion plays were produced all over Europe during the Middle Ages and constitute a subject far greater than this study can encompass. Thus, the following brief summary will focus to a large extent on the English dramas, for they are the ones which culturally fed into the much later British Victorian veneration of motherhood, which in turn coloured English Canadian attitudes during World War One. Before looking at these dramas, however, I will consider the early Christian cultural attitudes towards motherhood and the quietness of Mary.

1. Mary: Not a Revolutionary

Prior to the Middle Ages Mary did not have such a significant inspirational role in the Christian tradition. She was very quiet on the subject of her son's death. She provided a model of gentle acceptance, not revolutionary zeal. John's is the only gospel in the Bible in which Mary is present at the cross while Jesus is dying. She does not speak but is spoken to by Jesus who entrusts her into John the Baptist's care and John into her care. Even though she is silent, her presence there indicates her acceptance of this event and it is in this position that she gains fame in the Middle Ages as the Mater Dolorosa and is visualized as such in the *pietà*.

Mary was part of a new cult which set out to re-configure family relationships. This had an impact on Mary for, unlike the Jewish mother of martyrs, her status was no longer guaranteed because she was Jesus' mother. The new family was made up of philosophical brothers and sisters. The story of the Martyrs of Lyon (177 CE) showed the trend of the Christian tradition away from the focus on the family through its stress on the brotherhood between the martyrs. A reference to the Maccabean mother was included, however, indicating that her story was still important. Christian authors knew it would have the power to influence their audiences because people would still identify with the personal intensity of this tragedy. This story was well known at the time and would have provided the Christian martyrology with a pre-fabricated structure and an historical tradition. It may also be that by including this reference the martyrologist was registering the powerful influence the tale had to drive home the validity of the cause.

The virgin Mother does appear in this story, likely as a reference to both Mary and the church. She has the role of a mother who had lost her children and then found them again. The lost or “stillborn” (Musurillo, 1972:77) children refer to those who had been members of the church but had shied away from announcing their faith when the Christians had been captured. Unlike the Maccabean mother, the virgin Mother is not responsible for encouraging these people to return to her and their faith. That role was taken by the martyrs, inspired as they were by the “infinite mercy of Christ”(Musurillo, 1972:77), while they were imprisoned during the summer of 177 CE.

Joyce Salisbury believes that by the time of Perpetua’s martyrdom in 202 CE, the Christian ideal of philosophical kinship had been embraced by the community to the extent that “the time of the Maccabean mother was over; martyrdom was a matter of private conscience, not family ties” (1997:91). Although the emphasis on family ties as a heartrending element of a martyrology, particularly the mother-son relationship, may have subsided during the early centuries of Christianity, the image of mother Mary became increasingly more popular over time and her status as the mother of the sacrificed son grew.

It was not until the end of the 11th century that the legendary Mary adopted the role of Mater Dolorosa in Italy, France, England, the Netherlands, and Spain (Warner 1983:210). She gained a following among the cloistered Christians in the twelfth century. The sculptured image of the pietà or “Image of Pity” was introduced in the early 14th Century and in paintings in the 15th century (Cunneen 1996:188).²³ Another very significant presentation of Mary by this time was as an intercessor. Alongside her son she was seen to

²³ Warner makes the point that although the pietà did not enter Christian imagery until the Middle Ages, one of the original visual influences was the figure of Isis holding her dead son Osiris, from the Egyptian cult that lasted into the Christian period (Warner 1983:209).

appeal to God on behalf of petitioners. Jesus attains this position through the offering of his blood, while Mary achieves her status as an intercessor through the offering of the milk from her breast as a sign of the sacrifice she has made for the Christian community (Newman 1995:83).

2. Corpus Christi Plays: The Dramatization of Mary's Role

By the end of the Middle Ages Mary had been talked about, dramatized, painted, and sculpted so often and widely that she had taken hold in the imaginations of those who lived well beyond the cloisters (Newman 1995:80). During the years of the Crusades, warriors and pilgrims travelled to the birthplace of Christianity and returned to European countries with an invigorated religious faith informed by Mediterranean influences including that of expressive mourning practices (Warner 1983:210). It was at this time that the cult of the Mater Dolorosa started to spread through Europe. The cult was promoted by the Franciscans who added drama and image to the passion story thereby circumventing the problem of appealing to audiences who did not speak Latin, the language of the church (Tydeman 1994:19). The impact of seeing the enactment of the passion story must have been quite intense for those who could not afford the trip to the holy lands. The techniques used in the presentation of the dramas were borrowed from existing forms of dramatic entertainment – “dialogue, racy, earthy and often declamatory, comedy prominent and often scabrous” (Tydeman 1994:20). In this broadly appealing manner the plays were able to bring home the Christian teachings. Warner puts it in modern terms: “The Stations of the Cross were a cycle of meditations that operated as satellite television of some great

international event does now: it reported the drama of Christ's sufferings at first hand."

(Warner 1983:211). The mother-son relationship came to be highlighted, for

The virgin was the instrument mediating bafflement at the mystery of the Redemption into emotional understanding. She made the sacrifice on Golgotha seem real, for she focused human feeling in a comprehensible and accessible way (Warner 1983:211).

The earliest liturgical drama extant comes from Britain, although it was probably originally developed on the continent (Tydeman 1994:6). The plays were sponsored and acted by guilds each of whom were responsible for specific episodes (Witt 1995:2). The medieval dramas have been described as "Corpus Christi or craft cycles, moralities and moral interludes, saint plays, miracle plays," but Tydeman argues that these classifications are arbitrary and should not obscure that which the plays have in common -- their "evangelizing purpose" (Tydeman 1994:18). He describes the authors' primary intent as "to instruct the populace in those truths essential for their salvation by rendering them accessible, and to alert men and women to the cosmic battles being waged over the fate of their own immortal and individual souls" (Tydeman 1994:18).²⁴ In carrying out their aim the authors of the plays exhibited what Tydeman views as a great "understanding of what popular taste will accept" even for those who did not have much faith in Christian doctrine (1994:27).

Elizabeth Witt's comprehensive book, *Contrary Marys in Medieval English and French Drama*, summarizes the presentation of Mary's character at the points where she

²⁴ The battles being waged over the souls of the British audience took a twist in 1534 when Henry VIII established himself as head of the church, but this did not mean an end to the religious content of the plays. The efforts designed to support Henry's takeover made good use of the stage. The propagandists of this time, recognizing "that in a nation that remained to a large extent illiterate, especially in those outlying regions where Catholicism was most firmly entrenched, drama communicated ideology effectively and entertainingly

enters the stories in the English cycle dramas and the French Passion plays. In the English plays there is a section in the Annunciation and Incarnation scene where Mary obediently accepts the will of God.²⁵ Mary's biggest scene is at the Foot of the Cross although in the French plays she is far more vocal (Witt 1995:164). In all versions she is disconsolate, wishing that she would die before her son for she cannot stand the pain of seeing his beautiful body tortured on the Cross. In Christ's Death and Burial scene in the York Cycle, Mary cries "Allas, sone, sorowe and site,/That me were closed in clay!/ A swerde of sorowe me smite,/ To dede I were done this day!" (Bevington 1975:156-60). Mary's speech here, as in much of the poetry of the time, can be described as a form of complaint literature of the laments of bereaved mothers (Bevington 1975:580).²⁶ Both Jesus and John in the York cycle take on the task of telling her to stop crying for it will not change anything.

In spite of the tears of her Mater Dolorosa character or the pity inspired by the Mary of the Pietà, some of the joy of the Maccabean mother is written into her story in the Medieval dramas. In the Resurrection and Ascension scenes Mary sees the pain has been worthwhile and she finds happiness in Jesus' ascent to heaven (Witt 1995:165). But the sorrow of Mary's character is tempered less by this joy which is to be shared by all people, but rather by the strength of her acceptance of Christ's role in history. This strength,

to the general public in concrete visual and oral terms." (White 1997:135). The passion plays did carry on, being performed into the 1600s, but gradually the scripts were revised to conform to Protestant orthodoxy.

²⁵ In the N-town cycle, notable for its emphasis on Mary, the angel Gabriel spends some time urging her to accept the Incarnation. All souls living and dead wait in anticipation for her response for their salvation weighs in the balance (Witt 1995:159).

²⁶ Examples of these laments can be found in the passion play from Benediktbeuern which has an extended section on Mary at the foot of the cross where she wishes "Let my little one live for my sake. And let me die, his mother,/ Mary, most pitiable woman./ What use are life and body to me?" (Bevington 1975:220). Mary's lament is also like that of mothers in "The Slaughter of the Innocents" from Fleury. This play describes Christ's flight into Egypt and the killing of all the suckling children by Herod's order, an atrocity parallel to that of Pharaoh. In this story the bereaved mother is advised to understand that her grief rests on her joy. In another parallel of history the main mother of the play (cf. Matt. 2:18) is Rachel and like the Rachel of

however, does not translate into power within the Holy Family or function as a role model of strength for women. Witt argues that the power that Mary's character took on in popular culture, as is evidenced by the large number of miracle stories attributed to her, was undermined in the English plays because all of those stories in which Mary acts on her own volition were excluded from the plays (Witt 1995:134). Witt believes that "by manipulating the image of the Virgin Mary, the primary official role model prescribed for women, the church and by extension the dramatists could effectively marginalize women" (Witt 1995:132). But at the same time Mary held sway outside the church.

Mary has gone through many character changes through the years in the places she has been known. By the nineteenth century in Victorian England she once again presented an appealing image to many women from different faiths and classes. This coming together in respect for Mary was possible "because the age itself venerated motherhood" (Cunneen 1996:266). Paul Fussell, a noted World War One historian, argues in his article "The Fate of Chivalry, and the Assault upon Mother" that this canonization of motherhood during Queen Victoria's reign was tied to a rejuvenation of the ideals of chivalry which held that "one's attitude towards one's mother should be conspicuously chivalric, if not reverential" (Fussell 1988:238). This sentimentality grew in opposition to the "utilitarianism, industrialization, materialism, agnosticism and socialism" of the times (Fussell 1988:222). It was during Victoria's "reign that it became popular to domesticate Britannia, formerly imagined as a rather threatening classical warrior, by designating her 'Mother Britain'" (Fussell 1988:241). It will be seen in the chapters to come that it was in defense of Mother Britain and all of civilization, that Canadian soldiers were called to sacrifice their lives.

Genesis, now suffers from childlessness. She is comforted and asked to restrain her tears for "although you

3. Mary and Fatima's Past: The Historical Overlap of Their Lamentations

Mary's character may have influenced attitudes towards mothers thousands of years after her life but her story also reflects past traditions of earth goddesses of fertility and agriculture whose children were lost, indicating the immense popularity of the bereaved mother goddess and the ability of her tale to interpret life. Mary mourns the loss of her son just as the Sumerian goddess of the earth Inanna weeps for her son/spouse Dumuzi when he is sacrificed to the underworld. Lamentations recited in the cult of Dumuzi have come down to us which tell of the pain of the bereaved mother:

His mother wailing begins the lamentations for him;
Wailing and sobbing she begins to lament for him.
She wanders, bringing a burden of tears;
She sits and puts her hand to her heart;
She wails; her sorrow is bitter;
She laments; her lament is bitter (cited in Briffault, 1969:93).

Although Inanna cries for him, "she herself delivered Dumuzi to his fate" much as Mary did so to Jesus by consenting to the Incarnation and the Atonement (Warner, 1983:207). In the Babylonian version of this tale Dumuzi translates into Tammuz and Inanna into Ishtar.²⁷ A similar story is told over again in the Egyptian cult of Isis in which the latter weeps over the death of her son/spouse Osiris. Plutarch tells us that this myth was celebrated annually culminating in Isis' resuscitation of Osiris (Warner 1983:209).

grieve, rejoice that you weep./ For, truly, your sons live blessed above the stars" (Bevington 1975:70).

²⁷ A biblical reference to the ritual mourning of Tammuz is in Ezekiel (8:14). The women sitting in front of the north gate of the temple weeping for Tammuz were referred to as an abomination. Tammuz plays the role of spouse but, more importantly, that of the son who dies each year after the harvest and is mourned by the mother-goddess. The cult celebrating this story enacted ritual wailings and lamentations and rites to assist in his resurrection (Briffault 1969:91).

The mourning ceremonies, songs, and poetry commemorating the death of Fatima's son Husayn are also thought to reflect ancient Babylonian ideas concerning the cult of Tammuz and the Persian legend of the death of Siyavush (Chelkowski, 1979:3).²⁸ Briffault suggests the possibility that the term "ta'ziya," the name of the ritual commemorating the death of Husayn meaning mourning and lamentation, is "a corrupt reminiscence" of "ta'uz" or Tammuz (1927:99).

4. Fatima's Story: A Legend of Sadness

Fatima, as in some of the medieval stories of Mary, had foreknowledge of her son's death. In a story written in the tenth century by Ibn Qawlawayh, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to tell the Prophet Muhammed that his daughter Fatima would have a child who would be killed by the community after the Prophet had died (Ayoub 1978:71). The Prophet repeated twice that he had no need of such a child until Gabriel told him that the leadership of the community would remain with the progeny of that child. The Prophet accepted this news and told Fatima, who responded just as her father did (Ayoub 1978:71). Thus she had to live with the painful knowledge of her son's death even prior to giving birth.

One of the many ways in which the Fatima of legend has been compared with Mary deals with the birth of these women's sons. While Fatima gave birth through her left thigh, Mary did the same through her right thigh (Vaglieri 1995:847). There are many such delightful legendary tales of Fatima which colour-in the sparse historical information

²⁸ Siyavush, a young prince, escaped his father's anger by going to Turan where he ended up being murdered. This pre-Islamic story has survived through the writings of Islamic historians who, although they stripped much of the religious content from the tale, do mention some details which tell of the sanctity of this hero who became the centre of a cult that included annual sacrifices at his grave amidst much weeping and some sources say, face cutting (Yarshater 1979:90-1).

available. One of them concerns her legendary sadness over her father's death. She was said to have cried so much when her father died that she disturbed her neighbours and was asked to go to the graveyard at night so that her weeping would not keep people awake (Pelly 1879:113) Her strong association with her father is alluded to in one of her names, Umm Abiha, "mother of her father." There are a few possible explanations for this title, most of which deal with the close association between the cults of Mary and Fatima, thus it may be a counterpart to Mary's title, "Mother of God" (Vaglieri 1995:845). She is also called al-Muhaddatha because, like Mary, the angels told her she was chosen among women and purified by God (Vaglieri 1995:847).

Unlike any other grieving mother of a martyr, Fatima was already dead when Husayn was beheaded at Karbala in 680 CE by the caliph Yazid. Fatima's suffering for her son in Paradise extends beyond the boundaries of time, reflecting the sorrow which pervades the earth and carries universal meaning: "All things weep in emulation of her tears, and the tears of the faithful here on earth are but a way of sharing in her sorrows and a means of bringing consolation to her broken heart" (Ayoub 1978:144).

As a modern model of behavior, "Fatima is remembered and invoked when a mother mourns her son, when she cries for her family's troubles, for her own sorrows, because Fatima knows what a woman's suffering is all about" (Friedl 1997:150). Her role as a model is reflected in the fact that her name is one of the most common names for girls in Iran and her image is present in posters and murals on the streets (Friedl 1997:149).

5. Ta'ziyeh: the Dramatization of Fatima's Role

If the success of a drama is to be measured by the effects which it produces upon the people for whom it is composed, or upon the audiences before whom it is represented, no play has ever surpassed the tragedy known in the Mussulman world as that of Hasan and Husain (Pelly 1879:iii).

In 1859, Lewis Pelly joined the British Legation in Persia where he worked on the Persian and Arabian shores of the Gulf for eleven years. During his time there he was struck by the impassioned grief caused by the "Persian Passion Play," the ta'ziyeh, and was so impressed by the story and effect on the audience that he asked a friend of his who taught actors to transcribe the stories for him. In 1879, he published thirty-seven of the fifty-two scenes which he had collected.²⁹ The first volume contains many of the sad tales of the Muslims including the deaths of Ibrahim the son of Mohammed, of Mohammed himself, his daughter Fatima, and his grandsons Hasan and Husayn.³⁰ Pelly believed it important to present to the Western world a translation of what he considered was a singular drama. Its uniqueness stemmed from "its intolerable length... its marvellous effects upon a Mussulman audience, both male and female... and in the circumstance that the so-called unities of time and space are not only ignored, but abolished" (1879:v). He was impressed by the fact that Mohammed and his family are central figures in stories which extended from Joseph and his brothers to the Day of Judgement. Thus, like god, they seem to be universally present.

²⁹ Pelly follows in what Chelkowski refers to as "the tradition of scholar-diplomats" (Chelkowski 1979:262). There were a number of other foreign observers who had previously written about the Iranian Muharram celebrations. Through their works one can see that the celebrations developed from "a mourning ritual into full-scale theatre" (Chelkowski 1979:259). A major aspect of this development was the addition of the spoken element to the drama augmenting what had previously been a silent staging of tableaux.

³⁰ I have used this, the more common spelling of Husayn's name in recent times, but left Pelly's spelling of Husain as it was published in 1879.

The core of the tragedy takes place at Karbala where Husayn and his family and followers met an Umayyad force and were defeated. The color and poignancy of the tale come with the details which were added through time and piety. Pelly's version tells how Husayn, on the morning of the battle, prepared himself by washing and anointing himself with musk.³¹ When questioned about his actions his reply tells of his expectation of death, "Alas! There is nothing between us and the black-eyed girls of Paradise but that these troopers come down upon us and slay us!" (1879:xiv). Speaking to the cruelty of the enemy, legends have developed about an infant boy who was killed with an arrow through the neck while he was held in Husayn's arms during the battle. Husayn caught his blood in his hand and threw it up to heaven and not a drop came down (Ayoub 1978:117). His was not the only story of a young life to be lost, Husayn's nephew was killed as he stood by his uncle's side. After Husayn was killed, his head was cut off and sent to the caliph, Yazid.

Before looking at the role Fatima plays in the ta'ziyeh I will examine how the drama participated in the shaping of people's attitudes. The central stories tell of the siege at Karbala of Husayn and his followers by Yazid the Sunni caliph. It began on the first day of the month of Muharram and ended on the tenth day called Ashura in 61 AH/680 CE. Soon afterwards the battlefields and tombs at Karbala became pilgrimage sites for Shi'ites (Chelkowski 1979:2).³² Right from its origins the ta'ziyeh commemorated the battle for political power of the caliphate and was used to represent and intensify the present struggles. An early example of this occurred in 351 AH/962 CE when the caliph

³¹ Like Jesus' anointing before his death, this act serves to purify the sacrifice (the martyr in this case) so as to make it acceptable to god. This, along with fasting, was also a custom of warriors on the battlefield when they expected to die.

³² It is likely that the annual Muharram mourning ceremonies developed with some ease because of the long Persian tradition commemorating dead heroes. The pre-Islamic legendary hero Siyavush was venerated with

Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan in Syria was opposed by Mu'izz al-Dawla as being an oppressor of the Prophet's Family. Mu'izz al-Dawla condemned the caliph publicly by putting up manifestos on the mosques of Baghdad (Baktash 1979:96). This act was followed the next year by his institution of mourning ceremonies that "were allegorical affairs, redolent of revolution and designed to obtain psychological control by means of the parallels they drew to stories of oppression and misfortune" (Baktash 1979:96). During the Shi'ite dynasty of the Buyids in northern Iran (932-1055 CE) the ta'ziyeh ceremonies were focused on the goal of opposing Sunni power and the re-enactments of the battle scenes resulted in deaths (Baktash, 1979:96). The audience participation was not always so dramatic but the ta'ziyeh is known for its active audiences. Under the Iranian Safavid dynasty in the 16th century the Muharram ceremonies received official support. Fatima's death scene is incorporated into Pelly's ta'ziyeh collection presenting much of the legend of the daughter of Mohammed. Her attitude about being a mother of a martyr is shown in her conversation with her daughter Zainab. She asks Zainab to bring her a collection of small boxes. The last one causes Zainab to cry tears of blood when she sees that it contains her brother Husayn's torn shirt in which he will die. Fatima, knowing she herself will be dead when Husayn goes into battle, asks her daughter to kiss his throat and remember her when he prepares for battle (Pelly 1879:130). She tells her daughter that Husayn's body will not be washed or covered in the powder of lotus leaves or camphor when he dies. "His camphor shall be the dust of Karbala" she says (Pelly 1879:131).

This small scene confirms Pelly's comment that the ta'ziyeh seems to take place in a universal time and place. Fatima is able to show her daughter the shirt with all the tears of

sacrificial offerings and weeping at his grave with special singers, "the weeping of the magi" (Yarshater

battle already on it that Husayn will be wearing when he dies. Thus she has already experienced the death of her son. The fact that she knows that his dead body will not be washed indicates that she is aware of his future (or timeless present) status as a martyr, for Islamic martyrs took their bloodied clothes to Paradise as a sign of their status. Her request that her daughter kiss Husayn's throat is a gentle reminder of her maternal feelings for her son. Not only is this a vulnerable part of the body which one would only expose to someone you trusted and loved but it is where he lost his life when his head was cut off.

By the time Pelly was viewing the ta'ziyeh in southern Iran, the dramas had absorbed secular details from both folklore and the court (Chelkowski 1979:8). These details, close to home, helped the audience to identify their own suffering with the characters represented. "For women especially, they served as a wound-healing agent, for the point was always made that all suffering was slight when compared to that of the victims of Karbela" (Chelkowski, 1979:8). One of the traditions regarding the holy family which was often recalled in the ta'ziyeh was of their poverty and hunger. This not only added to the picture of a suffering family but it was easy for many of the viewers to identify with. Fatima fulfills the maternal role of nurturer when she helps her family out in a time of great hunger through her faith in God. One story tells of the day Mohammed came to Fatima asking for something to eat and she admitted she had nothing. But just then a neighbour arrived with a dish of food. When Mohammed asked her where it came from, she said "from God" and he compared her with Mary, who he believed was also able to produce food when it was needed most (Ayoub, 1978:42). This story was based on Sura 3:37 where

1979:90).

Mary explains that her constant supply of food is from God "Who gives without stint to whom He will."

The closeness of mother and son is apparent in the following poems of lamentation written for the ta'ziyeh celebrations from Fatima's perspective. It tells of her pain when contemplating Husayn's death.

How great is my grief for you, O my child, you who are the one lost to friends and family.

Again I say how great is my sorrow, O my child, for after you I shall desert sleep and even sleeplessness.

Woe is me, who took care of his shrouding, who beheld his face, throat and eyes, Woe, woe is me, who did wash him and walk behind his bier. Woe, woe is me, who did pray over him and lay him in his grave (Sa'id Ibn al-Nili d.565/1169 as quoted by Ayoub 1978:179).

It is clear from the beginning that despite Husayn being a middle-aged man when he dies, she still refers to him as her child. There is an intimacy implied in these words that his adulthood cannot eradicate, nor is it dissolved by the fact that she has already been dead for some time before this scene takes place. She speaks as any bereaved mother would upon dealing with the body of her dead child. She does not speak as a mother of a martyr who would not have washed his body.

Both the Corpus Christi plays and the ta'ziyeh were popular dramatic reminders of a religious world order which drew people's attention each year. Part of their story focuses on how mothers of brave sons who were willing to sacrifice themselves were to behave. Fatima's tale was invoked during the Iran-Iraq war to instill the appropriate sentiments and behavior in Iranian mothers. In the days of the Iranian Revolution Khomeini appointed women as the pillars of the nation and their most important task in this role was to raise

“brave and enlightened men and meek and united women.”³³ The role of the mother was made sacred by mothers offering their sons as martyrs to the cause. Khomeini encouraged women to follow the example of Fatima, for as one scholar stated during the war, “it is by their ability to raise martyrs, and educate them to be believers and dedicated soldiers for the cause that women become invaluable to Khomeini” (Afshar 1982:62).

Khomeini was not the only prominent leader to set up Fatima as the epitome of role models for women. Ali Shariati, who was a political prisoner in the 1960s and 1970s, wrote a famous essay entitled “Fatima is Fatima” (Hermansen 1983:87). This scholar of sociology and religion, who some argue was more influential than Khomeini, saw Fatima as providing an alternative model of womanhood from either the Western commercialized woman or the conservative Islamic type (Braue 1982:388).³⁴ Although there are stories from the Iran-Iraq war of strident mothers claiming they are sad not to have had more sons to offer into martyrdom, more common are the images of mothers of martyrs that combine the concepts of joy and sorrow concerning a mother’s lot. During the war the newspaper *Kayhan International* carried a daily feature claiming to be the last will and testament of martyrs. Yossef Ibrahim included a section of one of these wills in a *Wall Street Journal* article. He quoted one *basiij*³⁵ who wrote to his mother, “I know it is hard for a mother to lose a child but dear mother rejoice that your son has chosen the only road leading to God and to perfection from among so many materialistic and worthless ways” (Ibrahim 1983). This letter asks the mother to follow Fatima’s model and look patiently beyond the things

³³ This statement was originally printed in *Enqelaley Eslami*, 24 May 1981 and was here quoted by Afshar (1982:61).

³⁴ Shariati was very popular in Iran especially with younger people. When the ban on his writings was lifted in 1978, his works were so sought after that stalls selling his writings emerged on street corners throughout Iran (Hermansen 1983:88).

of this world to the purity of the Hereafter. The parents of martyrs often advertised their sons' deaths as they would a wedding or birth announcement (Omid 1995:122). They showed great pride in giving their sons to their country and those who had lost three or four sons had their stories placed on the front page asking their compatriots to "share their joy and sorrow" (Omid 1995:122).

The sorrow of Fatima rather than any joy is now present in the huge graveyard in Tehran, Behesht-e-Zahra, built by the Iranian government for the martyrs. It is perhaps the largest in the world for martyrs, with 27,000 graves. There are still mothers who come to the graveyard once famous for its fountain, which flowed red for the martyrs buried there. In 1993, the government turned off the "blood" as part of their efforts to develop friendlier relations with Iraq (AFP, 15 December 1997). This makes no difference to one mother of a martyr who, for thirteen years, lived in a shack constructed over her son's grave until her poor health forced her to reduce her overnight stays to once a week (AFP, 15 December 1997). This mother is a living reminder of Fatima, Umm Abiha, weeping each night over her father's grave and grieving for her son for all time.

vi. Al-Khansa: Poet and Mother in the Time of Mohammed and Political Role for Twentieth Century Palestinians

The memory of another mother of martyrs from the Islamic tradition was called upon in the early part of the twentieth century to support the Palestinian resistance against the British Mandate (Mogannam 1937).³⁶ Al-Khansa presents us with an interesting

³⁵ Most of the martyrs in the war were young volunteers, the *basijj* (mobilization of the oppressed).

³⁶ An unusual aspect of Mogannam's presentation of al-Khansa as a role model lies in the fact that Mogannam was a Christian.

example of a mother of martyrs because of the partial record of her feelings that she has left us in her poetry. Her life spanned the origins of Islam at a time when loyalty to tribe was a way of life. She wrote of her deep sorrow following the deaths of her two brothers in tribal warfare. Although little is known of her life, the traditional stories from her tribe, Banu Sulaym, state that not long after the deaths of her brothers she headed a delegation from her tribe to Medina (ca. 629 CE) to convert to Islam (Jones 1992:89).³⁷ If there is any truth to this story it does encourage one to think that she saw the new religion and political philosophy as a means to overcoming the constant tribal warfare which had taken the lives of her brothers.

According to the traditions she exhibited her full support for Mohammed the night before the battle of Qadisiyya when she counselled her four sons to fight for Islam and, if necessary, to die for it. She claimed her right to be heard and obeyed by them on the basis of her status as a mother who had suffered pain for them and as a woman of purity. She assured them that "I have never betrayed your father, nor cast any reflection upon your dignity of honour" (Mogannam 1937:22). This same argument for the mother's power over her sons based on her own purity was made by the Maccabean mother. She notes, "I was a chaste maiden and did not leave my father's house; but I kept guard over the rib built into woman's body. No seducer of the desert nor deceiver in the field corrupted me, nor did the seducing and beguiling serpent defile my maidenly purity. Through all the days of my prime I stayed with my husband" (2 Macc. 18:7-9). When al-Khansa heard that all four sons had

³⁷ The details from the tribal traditions that state that al-Khansa led a deputation to meet with Mohammad and that she was present at the battle of al-Qadisiyya are, Gabrieli states in his *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article about the poetess, "very suspect to western critics" (1991:1027). Nevertheless, they have some currency for because of them she was called forth as a model of behaviour in Palestinian resistance to the British Mandate, as well as being written about by the commentator on that period, Mogamman. These stories are repeated in

died she remarked, "I consider it an honour that they died for the sake of Islam. I ask only that God allow me to meet them in Paradise" (Fernea and Bezirgan 1977:4).

Al-Khansa's story can now be found on a variety of Internet sites all of which show respect for her as a great poet and some of which view her as a political model for women. On the site of Planetarabia her tale of pride in her sons is repeated with the added phrase of "mother of martyr" at the end – a phrase which is heard increasingly in the media. "My sons I bore you with pain and brought you up with care; You have fallen today for the cause of Islam. Who says you are dead; You are very much alive, and alive with honour. I feel proud to be the mother of martyrs" ("Al-Khansa" 2002). Not all Arab women are impressed with the pervasive power of Al-Khansa's image to shape women's lives. The feminist author Nuha Samara, writing at the time of the Gulf War (1991), rejected Al-Khansa's image as "crowned in black... her voice and her opinions circumscribed, unable to say how the war might benefit her and how it might harm her" (in DeYoung 2000:51). Speaking directly to al-Khansa's role as mother of martyrs she asks,

Is the Khansa of the past also the Khansa of the present? Have the roles of Arab women changed since the time of Khansa? Or do they still come and go in her place? Shouting jubilation when one of their children suffers martyrdom, ululating with their hearts black as night... Is she the geography that mothers heroes...? (in DeYoung 2000:50).

Clearly for many Palestinians she is still the prototype for mothers of heroes. Her image was sadly brought to life again during the Intifada of the late 1980s and in subsequent years. There are an overabundance of stories to cite that show how popular this role has been. One example, which raises some interesting comparisons, was written about

the work of the modern author Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and are available on the Internet. They also have been remembered in the work of the modern Palestinian poetess, Fadwa Tuqan.

in the *Chicago Tribune* on 2 February, 1996. It told a story of a three-year-old boy, Eyad, from the Palestinian refugee camp of Jabaliya. His mother, named after the other famous Islamic mother of martyr, Fatima, said that she “deliberately conceived Eyad during the Intifada to replace a brother of the same name who was killed... a martyr to the cause of Palestine” (Rowley 1996).³⁸ Asserting the power of the mothers, Umm Eyad (mother of Eyad) said, “The mothers of the martyrs are very fertile and fruitful. If you plant one martyr, you will get 500 more” (Rowley 1996). The truth of this statement is often expressed in the media reports of the present Intifada, which began in 2000, where martyrs of the suicide-bomber type and their supportive mothers are the subjects of frequent headlines.³⁹

The recognition of the spreading influence of a martyr’s story had been expressed in similar language of growth and fecundity before, closely linking it with the etymological origins of propaganda, to propagate, or sow. One notable example is that of the Christian, Tertullian (c. 155-222), who wrote a letter to the Roman officials warning them of the cost of their injustices towards the Christians, “We become more numerous every time we are hewn down by you: the blood of the Christians is seed” (*Apology* 50:13).

³⁸ Stories of replacement children go back to the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 4:25, Sam. 12:24). In parts of the Middle East it is still common in modern times for a later child to be given the same name as that of a dead sibling, or a name showing that the young one is a replacement for the earlier child (Eickelman 1989:184).

³⁹ These stories are now so common in Western media that they have migrated to the comics. In response to the newer phenomenon of female suicide-bombers the *Doonesbury* cartoon showed a Western newspaperman interviewing a young girl wearing the Palestinian martyr’s headband, “Mystery Martyr, what do your parents think of your career path?” “They’ve already printed up my martyr posters, announcements and invitations, and they’ve booked the mourners tents! While they will miss me very much, they know my sacrifice will set me on the road to paradise, where the Koran promises I will be greeted with refreshments.” The reporter asks, “What will you do with your 72 virgins?” and she responds, “save them for my little brother. He’s interning for Hamas” (*Ottawa Citizen* 25 April 2002). Although this comic is interesting for its reflection of Western attitudes towards women and Islam, the point here is that stories of martyrs have become common reading material.

vii. Sikh Mothers and Grandmothers

1. Mata Gujar: Sikh Grandmother of Martyrs

The wisdom of Umm Eyad's words is known in the Sikh tradition as well. In one of the popular cartoon booklets presenting Sikh history that are sold in Punjab today, the following piece of doggerel expresses a similar sentiment:

Mir Mannu is our Sickle
We the Fodder for him to mow,
The more he reaps
The more we grow (Singh 1983)

Muin-ul Mulk, known by the Sikhs as Mir Mannu, the sickle, was the governor of Lahore (1748-53). According to Sikh tradition Mir Mannu captured and tortured Sikh mothers and their children in his continued efforts to kill the Sikhs. In a version of this story written by Amar Singh in 1906, these mothers were said to have taken comfort in remembering the fortitude of Mata Gujar, the mother of the tenth and last guru, Gobind Singh, and grandmother of his martyred sons. Mata Gujar planted the first "seed" in the Sikh tradition of the stories of mothers of martyrs. Her version of this tale, which has been repeated in so many religious traditions, was a little different for she was a grandmother of martyrs. Her status as both mother and grandmother adds to the poignancy of the story. She loves and cares for her grandsons like a mother, but she has the added power over the reader's heartstrings as her age makes her even more vulnerable than a woman in her prime. Her emotional and physical fortitude is unexpected on account of both her gender and her years.

Her first personal acquaintance with martyrdom came when her husband, the ninth guru, Tegh Bahadur, was martyred in 1675. Her next taste of it came in 1704, precipitated

by the trickery of the Emperor Aurangzeb, who encouraged the Sikhs into leaving the Fort at Anandpur by promising them safe passage and then attacked them. In the battle which ensued the members of Mata Gujari's family became separated. Her son, Gobind Singh, and his two eldest sons went on to fight. These two young teenagers were killed in battle. Mata Gujari and her two younger grandsons, Zorawar and Fateh Singh ended up escaping together. Although they finally found a safe haven, they were betrayed by a servant and eventually imprisoned.⁴⁰ Zorawar and Fateh refused to renounce their faith and they were sentenced to be bricked-up alive. Before the wall was past their heads they were beheaded and soon after their grandmother also died.

2. Mir Mannu's Mothers: Augmenting the Story Through Time

It was the story of Mata Gujari which the mothers, captured by Mir Mannu, were said to be remembering to give themselves the strength to face the tortures ahead in the version of the tale told by Amar Singh, "Perseverance of Sikh Women," found in his *Anecdotes From Sikh History*. This martyrologist, like Soloman bar Simson, the Hebrew chronicler, made use of a previous story of a famous mother to augment the impact of his tale and frame it in a classical outline. There are other ways in which we can see the Sikh

⁴⁰ A popular English language illustrated book describes Mata Gujari's behaviour towards her grandsons during this interval (Singh 1997). She encourages her grandsons to be true to their traditions. In this behaviour she is portrayed in a manner strikingly similar to that of the Maccabean mother in 2 Maccabees and Pesiq.R. 43, who urges on her youngest son just before he was killed. Another interesting detail which can be compared between the two stories is the trickery shown on the part of the ruler. In both cases the scene is the court of the rulers. For the young Sikh boys the trick was in entering the court through the small opening down at the bottom of the great gates. It was expected that they would bow down to enter and thus it would look as though they were bowing to Nawab Wazir Khan. But, being presented as intelligent as well as brave, they put their feet in first and avoided bowing (Singh 1997:16). In the Midr. Lam 1:16 version of the Maccabean story the King calls the youngest of the boys to him and suggests that he could just throw his ring down on the ground and the boy could pick it up. This would look as if he were bowing to the king but he would know that he was just picking up the ring. As one would expect, the boy does not accept this offer.

martyrologists making their stories more compelling. Lou Fenech outlines some of these techniques in his essay “The Mother as Heroic Icon: Perceptions of Sikh Motherhood in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries” (2001). His intent in tracking the changes in the stories concerning the mothers is not merely to highlight a nostalgic increase in their bravery as time goes by, but to show how the bravery was actively written into the stories to reflect the political environment of the time. He argues that the heroic mother icon “was largely constructed and perpetuated through the tireless campaigns of the principal Sikh reform movement of the period (end 19th beginning 20th century), the Singh Sabha” (Fenech 2001:3). In the development of the story of the mothers captured by Mir Mannu, Fenech pinpoints the change with the publication of Giani Gian Singh’s *Panth Prakash* in 1887. This version of the story of the captured mothers and children, as well as that of Amar Singh (1906), expanded the presence of the mothers and increased their bravery in comparison to an earlier, pre-Singh Sabha, version published in 1841. In Amar Singh’s telling of the “Perseverance of Sikh Women,” three hundred captured women were offered the opportunity to convert to Islam and save themselves and their children and gain a life of riches. Upon their refusal they were starved and forced to do hard labour. When this did not break the mothers, Mir Mannu ordered the babies be killed with swords. “Their gory corpses were thrown into the laps of the [mothers] or suspended from their necks” (1906:15). In Gian Singh’s version, also written during the time of the Singh Sabha, the details are even more vivid: “Several [of the children] were caught on spears as they came down [and afterwards hacked into pieces. Their severed limbs were subsequently] threaded through to form garlands [which were placed around each respective mother’s neck]. Those young innocents (lit. ‘milk-drinkers’)[who were impaled] writhed and wriggled as they

died” (Giani Gian Singh 1880 as quoted by Louis Fenech in unpublished paper).⁴¹ In contrast, the atrocities in the pre-Singh Sabha version are minimal. In fact the 1841 version makes no mention of killing the children; rather one child is jailed and the mothers’ reaction is to weep.

In the versions of Gian Singh (1887) and Amar Singh (1906), the youth of the children is stressed through their description as suckling babies. This exact same emphasis is made in the later versions of the Maccabean tale (b. Git. 57b and Lam. 1:16) which came after the first version still in existence, 2 Maccabees. Doran notes that in the case of the Jewish story, this emphasis on youth “only underlines the miraculous character of the resistance” (1980:192). While for Doran the resistance of which he speaks is that of the youngest son, the miraculous resistance is also exhibited by the mother who could watch her innocent baby being killed without giving in to the temptation of conversion. So too, in the story of the Sikh mothers, the miracle of the religious conviction is found in the mothers who watch their children being killed without submitting to Islam. In fact they are presented as doing more than merely resisting temptation, they are thankful, reminiscent of the Maccabean mother’s joy, for their children’s fate. The mothers thanked god that “their children had no chance of ever being called unworthy, and had tasted of the cup of martyrdom in their very infancy” (1906:17).

It was not only the babies who were to be congratulated on their worthy character, but the mothers as well. The question of honour also arose in the introduction to “The Perseverance of Sikh Women.” “Our mothers, who could outrival even their Spartan sisters, gave us no cause for shame... not once did they do aught calculated to bring shame

⁴¹ The image of babies being impaled will come up later in the dissertation in the World War One atrocity

on the people to whom they belonged" (1906:7). Just as in the stories of Al-Khansa, the Maccabean mother and of course the Virgin Mary, the martyrologists felt it was important to clarify that not only were all these women brave but they were pure too. This last comment regarding the Sikh mothers' strength assumes the reader's knowledge of another culture's history and heroines when the author makes a comparison between Sikh and Spartan mothers, to the detriment of the latter.⁴²

One would expect that a tale as compelling as this one would be remembered and repeated, particularly in times of political conflict, and it was. Cynthia Mahmood interviewed Sikh militants in the United States and wrote of these encounters in her book *Fighting for Faith and Nation: Dialogues with Sikh Militants* (1996). She included an interview with a Sikh soldier and his wife concerning their reaction to Operation Blue Star, the Indian Army's storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar, India 1984. In this context the woman repeated the story of what the mothers and babies of Lahore had suffered prefaced by her willingness to sacrifice her own sons. "As for my sons, I'll feel proud if they get killed for a holy cause. Everybody has to die, but those who die for honour never die, for they are immortal" (1996:105).⁴³

The wife of the Sikh soldier summed up the bravery of the eighteenth-century women saying, in much the same way as Amar Singh had done, "With folded hands they thanked God that their children had stood the test of their faith and had died bravely"

stories, the only difference being that they were stuck on bayonets instead of swords.

⁴² The image of the Spartan mother will be seen again in Chapter Three as it was a popular motif during World War One stories of mothers of soldiers.

⁴³ The question of honour was just as important to this woman as it was to the mothers of the past regardless of the culture. She took her children and left her home fearing she might be raped by the Indian police. "Thank God my honour was saved. I don't fear being killed but I don't want to be dishonoured" (Mahmood 1996:105).

(1996:106). In this case though, the children gained a sense of agency they had not had in the older story for here our story-teller says that they had withstood the test of their faith.

Fenech makes reference to this modern Sikh woman's story in his book *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*. He argues that it is likely that her understanding of Sikh history, specifically the episode of the slaughtered children, was influenced more by Kirpal Singh's painting of this event, entitled "Sacrificing Family before Faith," than by any written version of the story. And she is not alone in having her views structured more by image than the written word,

So influential are these paintings [of martyrs] that many Sikhs often describe eighteenth-century Sikh struggles by unknowingly alluding to the scenes depicted in them (particularly those episodes depicted in the paintings of Kirpal Singh) rather than to historical texts (Fenech 2000:46).

Paintings of martyrs by Kirpal Singh and others following his style are easily accessible for viewing from the museum within the precincts of the Golden Temple (Harimandir Sahib) in Amritsar to the Internet and are widely reproduced and available for purchase in the form of posters and comic books (See Plate 1). Much like Christian art and the passion plays of the Christian and Shi'ite traditions, the visually accessible and graphic images of Sikh martyrs will help ensure their influence over the future, or as martyrologists would say, plant the seeds of more martyrs.

viii. Conclusion: Accepting the Sacrifice

In 1998 the American scholar Mark Juergensmeyer interviewed the family of the young militant Kanwarjit Singh who had been a part of the Khalistan Commando Force.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The aim of Sikh militants has been the creation of a homeland, Khalistan, "land of the pure."

In 1982 Kanwarjit had been inspired by the words of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the militant leader who was later killed in 1984 during the Indian attack on the Golden Temple and is widely hailed in the Sikh community as a martyr. Kanwarjit was eventually caught by the police in 1989 and took his own life by ingesting a cyanide pill. His family considered him to be a martyr as was evidenced by the shrine dedicated to him on the livingroom wall and the other “more intimate” one in the bedroom of Kanwarjit’s mother (2000:94). Although the family may have been proud of their martyr-son, Juergensmeyer describes an “aura of sadness” surrounding the household.

Although the assertions of pride and joyfulness attached to these stories of martyrs are plentiful, we are not meant to overlook how saturated the tales were and are with this aura. The pain is understood to be an essential part of the tale but it is not a description that any martyrologist would add to the story. We are meant to assume that no matter how defiant (and in particular, the mother of the martyr) that sadness is present. To actually speak of the heartache of losing a child would undermine the power of the tale in the same way that in ancient Carthage the mother’s tears would have nullified the sacrifice of her child .

This chapter has told the stories of many mothers who accepted the sacrifice of their children. Their emotional reaction ranged from a show of joy to a sadness which penetrated all of time. Nonetheless, all of them were presented in the martyrologies as accepting the necessity of the sacrifice. That message of acceptance was reinvigorated through the centuries. The Maccabean mother’s story was so powerful that it was often repeated by both Jews and Christians to fire the spirit of those facing persecution and unite their forces. The *danse macabre* enacted by the seven sons as they were tortured, set a standard for gruesome

deaths suffered by young children while their mothers watched. But martyrologists have found ways to increase the poignancy of their tales, for example by decreasing the age of the children who are sacrificed. In the repetitions of the story of the mothers of Lahore, the atrocities suffered by the children increase in inverse proportion to the decrease in the children's age. Although Mary and Fatima are not tearless mothers of martyrs, the message of their acceptance of their sons' deaths was clearly portrayed and with particular efficacy through dramatic representation. Unlike all the other tales, Al-Khansa's story did not rely on the details of atrocities to make it memorable, but all who heard her story understood that her sons died the painful death of the battlefield. Like all the other mothers in the end, she did not question the need to sacrifice her sons.

During the Victorian era of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the veneration of motherhood held sway over the imaginations of many in the British Empire. This sentiment arose in reaction to the industrialization of the age that was seen by many as causing the disintegration of society. Briffault's⁴⁵ mammoth three-volume anthropological work, *The Mothers*, published not long after World War One, in 1927, still bears the mark of the Victorian age, as he concludes with a deep bow to the powers of mothers.⁴⁶

Social organization itself—the associated group to which humanity owes its mere existence—was the expression of feminine functions. Those social sentiments, without which no aggregate of individuals can constitute a society, were the immediate derivatives of the feelings which bind the mother and her offspring, and

⁴⁵ Briffault was a novelist, social anthropologist and surgeon who had served on the Western Front in World War One.

⁴⁶ Although Briffault sees mothers as being very powerful in the creation of society, the intellectual abilities of women are “deficient in the qualities that mark the masculine intellect... The critical, analytical, and detached creative powers of the intellect are less developed in women than in men” (1969:507). The reason for this he assumes, “arises in all probability from the subordination and sacrifice to maternal functions which limits the physical growth of the mammalian female” (1969:507). In these thoughts he shows himself to be a man of his times but these were changing times with respect to the status of women and he reflects this in his response to the demands of the suffragette movement when he states that to achieve independence from this subordination, women must defend their own interests and men must unlearn much of the ‘patriarchal theory’ (1969:519).

consisted originally of these, and of these alone. Upon them the superstructure of humanity, and the powers and possibilities of its development, ultimately rest (1969:509).

It would be difficult to assign a greater power to the sentiments of the maternal relationship. But, as stated earlier in the chapter, when the devoted nurturer of the son agrees to his sacrifice, the strength of the mother-child bond is highlighted with an intensity sufficient to impact on the emotions of a great number of people. During the monumental conflict of 1914-18, extraordinary numbers of mothers were suddenly being asked to support the sacrifice of their sons to a larger cause, variously named as the defence of country, of Empire, of civilization, and of god. Like martyrologists of many different cultures and times, the recruiters and propagandists in this new industrial war realized the power of the role of the mother both to sanctify what might otherwise be paralyzing loss and to encourage even greater effort in the battle against the foe.

Chapter Two: The Language of Sacrifice

i. Introduction: Sanctification of Bravery

The legacy that has come down to us of World War I soldiers is one of bravery but not generally one of martyrdom, despite the fact that the war was overtly described and pictured in religious terms. It may be that had the war not been enveloped in an ironic understanding from the late 1920s onward, the concept of martyrdom would have been more closely associated with the soldiers. Also the nature of the battlefield was not conducive to the creation of martyrs. In the stagnant and mechanized theatre of war there were few opportunities for a hero to act in a courageous manner distinct from others – a manner which could then be developed into a compelling story. Yet there were highly influential people like the Bishop of London, Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, who did refer to the soldiers specifically as martyrs.⁴⁷ In other cases, martyr-like qualities were attributed to them without the actual term being used. The soldiers were presented in sermons, newspaper writing, novels, poetry, paintings, cartoons, and music as Christ-like figures. Often they were described as filling Christ's shoes and being more truly Christian than either those at home or the chaplains who served at home or in the war. T.A. Patterson, who served with the Canadian chaplain service and was critical of himself and his fellow officer chaplains, nevertheless, felt that he spoke for those who had served overseas when he said,

⁴⁷ Although Winnington-Ingram was the Bishop of London, England he had strong connections to Canada and was well received by many Canadians. Prior to the war he had taken two trips to Canada combining official church business and visits with relatives. He describes his travels through Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and Ontario in his autobiography that was published in Toronto as well as London. Large crowds came out to hear him speak in both urban and rural locations (Winnington-Ingram 1940:61-72). In the years

We have had our Gethsemanes and Golgothas. Most of us who went to “the place of the skull,” sounded to the depths the sternest relations between Life and Death, and have had mental and spiritual visions of the things of Time and Eternity impossible to those who stayed home... I saw more genuine Christianity in my two years’ stay “over there” than I have among ministerial place-seekers in my life-time as a clergyman (Patterson 1919:3).

Not only were the soldiers’ actions taken as examples of Christian sacrifice, they were also often depicted as pacifist warriors or peace-loving men forced into action by the aggressor. This last quality is clearly reminiscent of a more traditional understanding of martyrs as gentle souls not wanting to hurt anyone. As with martyrs, the qualities of self-sacrifice and the peace-loving natures attributed to the soldiers helped to promote the cause for which they stood. This latter description was, as many historians have stated, a great asset to the Entente, for “the Germans were never able to efface the initial impression that they were aggressors” (Lasswell 1972:197).

That we have forgotten the language of sacrifice used to describe the war is vividly shown by the fact that the story of a highly influential martyr of the time has all but disappeared from present day public knowledge. Edith Cavell, a British nurse who was executed on October 12, 1915, by the Germans for helping British prisoners escape occupied Belgium, was widely hailed as a martyr. This chapter begins with her story as an example of how powerful and prominent the language of sacrifice was during World War One.

A significant element of a martyrology is the tales of torture which serve to draw the attention, sympathies, and support of the audience. The Belgian atrocity stories of World War One filled this same function. Belgium became the national symbol of a martyr, the

leading up to the war the British Archbishops’ Western Canada Fund sent hundreds of English clergy to

country as a tortured innocent.⁴⁸ The best known English collection of Belgian atrocity stories is the *Bryce Report* (1916) which will be examined as a source of influence of public opinion in a manner similar to that of the torture scenes described in Chapter One.⁴⁹

Nonetheless, an example of an extraordinarily powerful atrocity story found outside the *Bryce Report* is discussed here because it had explicit religious overtones and was directly applicable to Canadians. The tale of the Canadian soldier crucified in Belgium was spread to great effect through rumour, newspaper, and images. One of the visual interpretations of the story was "Canada's Golgotha," a sculpture that was part of the Canadian War Memorials Fund (CWMF), a group of works by a variety of artists who were commissioned to depict the war. Another visual record of the religious impact on how the war was perceived that is to be examined, is the ubiquitous cartoons of the well-known artist of the time, Louis Raemaekers. Along with these cartoons, selected poetry and fiction of the period and the words of some of the chaplains show how the Christian idea of sacrifice and martyrdom was imbedded in the art, writings and propaganda of the war. Once this has been examined it will be easier to understand how the stories of the Canadian mothers from World War One can be seen to exist in a comparable situation to the mothers of martyrs discussed in Chapter One, where the death of their sons was interpreted as a gift to the divine to help bring balance to the world.

Canada and Winnipeg-Ingram was said to have considered volunteering himself (Heeney 1943).

⁴⁸ In their book on the German atrocities of World War One John Horne and Alan Kramer discuss in some depth the process by which martyrdom became "an attribute of the localities which had suffered from the German atrocities" (2001:311). Martyrdom was, they suggest, "the cultural model most readily available" to interpret local suffering and provide a framework for its commemoration (2001:309).

ii. Martyrs and Rumours

1. Edith Cavell: World War One Martyr

Nurse Cavell's martyrology had many of the characteristics of the stories of martyrs of the past. Being a woman, she was considered physically weak and this was contrasted with her strength of spirit that gave her the courage to help those in need even though it put her in danger. The last letter she wrote to her mother before going to prison indicates that she knew she was in danger of being arrested (Ryder 1975:231). The power of her tale to shape peoples' attitudes towards the enemy was quickly recognized. One of her biographers, Rowland Ryder, explained the speed at which her story spread as the work of the propagandists who "seized upon the affair: here was a splendid opportunity to build up this nurse ... as a saint and a martyr" (1975:226).

Just nine days after her death, on Trafalgar Day 21 October,⁵⁰ the Bishop of London, A.F. Winnington-Ingram "pointed out that Britain had now no need for a recruiting campaign, the execution of Edith Cavell was enough" (Ryder 1975:226).⁵¹ Ryder translated the truth of this statement into enlistment figures. In the eight weeks before the announcement of her execution the voluntary enlistments in the Territorial Force averaged 5,000 per week. For the same length of time after her death the figures averaged 10,000 enlistments per week.⁵² By December, the numbers had subsided to the pre-execution level,

⁴⁹ The report was summarized for a French readership by Henri Davignon (Horne and Kramer 2001:237).

⁵⁰ Trafalgar Day celebrates the British victory over the Spanish and French fleets at the Cape of Trafalgar in 1805.

⁵¹ Soon after Cavell was shot, the French executed two German nurses for similar activities. Lasswell comments on the Germans' inability to see the propaganda possibilities of the situation, suggesting that they took too narrow a view of military protocol which they believed gave the French the right to kill the nurses (1972:32).

⁵² Horne and Kramer provide an explanation for the "outpouring of British emotion" for Cavell stating that "apart from the fact that as a nurse she embodied wartime female selflessness... her tale particularized the surrogate relationship of British opinion with the invasion of Belgium by providing a direct victim (2001:311).

but Ryder concludes after his analysis of the enlistment figures that her death added "40,000 extra recruits to the army alone" (Ryder 1975:251).⁵³

Apparently, Edith Cavell's mother accepted the news of her daughter's death with stoicism and dignity (Ryder 1975:225). But the British propaganda office did not make use of her strong face the way the martyrologists of the past did in their descriptions of the mothers of martyrs.⁵⁴ She did not live to see the end of the war but through the efforts of the Bishop of Norwich she did receive some financial support from the government (Ryder 1975:225).

Although the propagandists made much of Cavell's death, they did not create a martyr out of nothing. The daughter of an Anglican minister, Cavell was a faithful Christian. The evidence from her friends and from trial records shows that similar to the courageous martyrs of the past, she was very calm during the period before her arrest, during her imprisonment, and even when the verdict was announced (Ryder 1975:184). She had her copy of the 15th century devotional prayers of Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, with which she spent a good deal of time, marking passages, which would have helped her keep her courage. Although generally the prayers ask the reader to turn towards a spiritual life there was one that she marked that mentioned a crown of patience and seems particularly apt for a woman awaiting news of her possible execution. "Without a combat

⁵³ Canadian enlistments show an increase as well, beginning in November and steadily going up through early 1916. The enlistment figures from Colonel Nicholson's *Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War* including officers and other ranks are: 1915 October – 12,837; November- 17,993; December- 23,683; 1916 January – 29,187; February - 27,662; March – 34,892 (Nicholson 1962:546). There were many factors affecting enlistments such as battle casualties, requests from Prime Minister Borden for more support, enlistment posters and propaganda. Yet it is safe to say that Cavell's execution would have added to the language of sacrifice that described the war as a battle against evil requiring men to enlist and fight for "good".

⁵⁴ In fact, according to the conversations Ryder had with Kitty Cavell, Mrs. Cavell's cousin, the War Office dealt with Edith Cavell's mother in quite an off-hand manner (Ryder 1975: 225).

thou canst not attain unto the crown of patience. If thou are unwilling to suffer, thou refusest to be crowned. But if thou desire to be crowned, fight manfully, endure patiently.”⁵⁵ In traditional martyr fashion she did not seek the crown of the martyr, for this would border on suicide, but did nothing to avoid it.

A small postscript to her recognition as a martyr concerns the state of preservation of her body, when it was exhumed on March 17, 1919, three and a half years after her death. A newspaper correspondent from Reuter’s wrote that “the body was well preserved and the features perfectly recognizable” (quoted in Ryder 1975:228). This comment places Edith Cavell in a long tradition within Christianity of martyrs whose bodies did not decay (Evans:2002).⁵⁶ The everlasting nature of the body was indicative of their holiness.

The English chaplain, Stirling Gahan, gave Cavell Holy Communion the evening before she was killed and was the last person to visit her. A statement she made to him has become famous and has had an interesting history of its own. “This I would say,” she considered, “standing as I do in view of God and Eternity, I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone” (quoted in Ryder 1975:214). One would expect to hear words of this nature, which stress an early Christian attitude of love, from a martyr, but it is easy to see that they would be a stumbling block to a war propagandist.

George Bernard Shaw commented cynically on the use of Edith Cavell’s name by the British propaganda system in the preface to his play, *St Joan*, published in 1923. He called Edith Cavell an arch heretic like Joan of Arc because, in the middle of the war, she

⁵⁵ This and other marked passages deemed relevant to her imprisonment and trial are quoted in Ryder (1975:188).

⁵⁶ This notion of the body of a martyr not decomposing is also found in Islam.

declared that “patriotism is not enough.” She was a nurse to wounded soldiers from both sides “acknowledging no distinction before Christ between Tommy and Jerry and Pitou the Poilu.” When she was shot

her countrymen, seeing in this a good opportunity for lecturing the enemy on his intolerance, put up a statue to her, but took particular care not to inscribe on the pedestal “Patriotism is not enough,” for which omission, and the lie it implies, they will need Edith’s intercession when they are themselves brought to judgment (Shaw 1951:773).

The monument to which Shaw refers is near Trafalgar Square in London and does now carry her statement along with the words: Humanity, Fortitude, Devotion, and Sacrifice. The statement was added in 1924, soon after publication of Shaw’s play (Ryder 1975:237). A Canadian memorial to Edith Cavell begun in 1919 by sculptor Florence Wyle stands on the grounds of the Toronto General Hospital (Boyanoski 1987:25). This bronze relief depicts Cavell supporting two wounded soldiers.⁵⁷ The earliest Canadian “monument” to Edith Cavell is a mountain in Jasper National Park named in March 1916, at the suggestion of the Premier of British Columbia, just five months after Cavell’s death. The naming occurred officially in 1921 with an Anglican Dedication Service, and a memorial service is held annually in the Jasper Anglican church. Even Cavell’s defence lawyer, Gaston de Leval, has a mountain named after him in Banff National Park.

The Jasper Heritage Theatre recently produced a one-woman play called, “Edith Cavell Returns” -- an anti-war statement in which the author, Grace Kohn, presents an “Edith” who “believes in the underlying unity of humanity.” The on-line promotional information from the theatre states that this belief is “a fitting sentiment to be expressed in

⁵⁷ The plaque below the relief says “Edith Cavell and the Canadian Nurses who gave their lives for humanity in the Great War: ‘In the midst of darkness they saw light.’ Lest We Forget.” It was erected by Società Italo Canadese, 11 November 1922.

Jasper, where visitors are welcomed from around the world” (“Jasper Heritage Theatre.” 2002).

Although Cavell would probably have accepted the promotion of such an ideal in her name, the dedication of the mountain in 1916 was likely done more to inspire enlistment than love.

2. The Bryce Report: The Magnum Opus of Atrocity Stories

While Edith Cavell’s martyrdom may have provided a boost in enlistment, recruitment officers needed more tales of this nature to ensure that men would continue to sign up. Thus, war propaganda, like martyrologies, came to rely on atrocity stories. Details of the physical tortures committed against the martyrs were frequently included in martyrologies as the genre developed. To describe in terms of blood and gore just what evils the enemy is capable of helps to startle the public out of complacency and into hatred. If the enemy can commit ultimate evil, it follows that only the act of supreme sacrifice is powerful enough to conquer them and achieve ultimate justice. This was the reasoning Pope Urban II had used in 1095 when he presented tales of Muslims invading Christian churches, raping women, and defiling altars to incite emotions of revenge and encourage men to take part in the first crusade (Jowett and O’Donnell 1992:44). Dr. Samuel Dwight Chown, general superintendent of the Methodist church in Canada, had the same idea of combining images of violated women and religious icons to prompt men to enlist in World War One when he said,

For myself it is enough to know that Christ, as I perceive Him, would not stand with limp hands if a ruthless soldier should attempt to outrage His holy mother as the women of Belgium were violated. To him all motherhood is sacred; nor would He

retreat and give place to the armed burglar, breaking with murderous intent into His home; nor would He witness, without any effort to prevent it, the destruction of the civil and religious liberty which His teaching has enthroned in our British Empire (*Christian Guardian* 23 August 1916)

The Committee on Alleged German Outrages presided over by Viscount James Bryce, formerly the British Ambassador to Washington, published a report on the conduct of the German troops in Belgium in 1915. The report was based on a volume entitled *Evidence and Documents Laid Before the Committee on Alleged German Outrages*. Both books were made available in Canada by the Ottawa Government Printing Bureau in 1916. The shorter *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (17 May, 1916) included an insert stating that the Dominion Government wished this “official” document to be “circulated widely and read with care.” Moreover, “the recipient should read and pass it on to a friend, with a request to do the same.” The Report claimed to give evidence according to the provisions of the Hague Convention of 1907 to which both Germany and England were signatories. Part I concerned the Conduct of German Troops in Belgium and Part II the Breaches of Rules and Usages of War and Acts of Inhumanity in Invaded Territories. The latter included the killing of non-combatants, treatment of women and children, the use of civilians as screens, the killing of prisoners, firing on hospitals and the abuse of the Red Cross and White Flag.

Buitenhuis describes the sources of the Report as “unnamed witnesses, second hand eyewitness reports and imagination” (1987:27).⁵⁸ Yet, Harold Lasswell, in his book

⁵⁸ Although Horne and Kramer agree with this perception of the report, they clarify that the political motivation of the committee was to prove that the militarism of the German officer corp was to blame not the German nation (2001:234-5). The committee hoped that by making evidence public, the report would ensure that such atrocities of war would not be repeated. “In short,” state Horne and Kramer, “it expressed the views of the late nineteenth-century peace movement” (2001:236).

Propaganda Technique in the World War, tells us that a good propagandist does not stray too far from the truth. In Barbara Tuchman's book on the origins and early days of the war, *The Guns of August*, she tells of "the usual orgy of permitted looting" which seems to be the fate of most if not all civilians during warfare (1962:314). But she then goes on to tell of mass murders the Germans committed in Dinant, Belgium, where six hundred and twelve bodies were identified and buried. Just after this massacre came the burning of the city, and particularly the world-famous library of Louvain on August 26 and 27, an act which was broadcast to the world (1962:319-22).

The stories of the atrocities committed against the women and children held great poignancy for their audience and were transformed into potent images on recruitment posters. Lasswell describes the *Bryce Report* as "the magnum opus of the War on this front" (1972:88). The Report follows what Lasswell describes as "a handy rule for arousing hate... if at first they do not enrage, use an atrocity" (1972:81).

The effectiveness of this rule was explained soon after by the British author Mrs. Peel in a very down-to-earth way in her book about domestic life in England during the war.

Because the state of tense excitement in which we existed upset our judgment and made any event seem possible, and also because if people must go to war and continue to be at war they must be made to hate each other and to go on hating each other, war stories were a feature of our life (1929:43).

The two stories which Mrs. Peel mentions that caused "unnecessary distress" were those of the babies whose hands had been cut off and the crucifixion of Canadians (1929:44). Lasswell comments on the importance, for the propagandist, of what Mrs. Peel has here referred to as "tense excitement" stating that "the propagandist who deals with a

community when its tension level is high, finds that a reservoir of explosive energy can be touched off by the same small match which would normally ignite a bonfire" (1972:190).

The impossibility of escaping the power of the atrocity stories and the hatreds they engender is poetically expressed in George Godwin's novel *Why Stay We Here* about a young Canadian officer in the war. The character Piers states: "Only a saint or a sage could escape the mass emotions of a nation at war"(1930:189).⁵⁹

One of the most gruesome atrocities of the *Bryce Report*, and certainly an equivalent to the tortures committed on the Maccabean boys as told in 4 Maccabees, was provided by an unnamed eye-witness in Belgium describing an event which took place on the 23rd August, 1916 outside Malines. A German soldier had knocked on a Belgian peasant's door. The peasant was shot because he took too long to answer the door. His wife then came out with a "little suckling child." She put the child down and attacked the Germans like a "lioness" – an act for which she was killed. Another soldier "took his bayonet and fixed it and thrust it through the child. He then put his rifle on his shoulder with the child up it, its little arms stretched out once or twice" (1916:51).⁶⁰ The inclusion of the adjective "suckling" is reminiscent of the stories of the Sikh and Maccabean mothers whose children were described similarly in later versions of their tales. Thus, across cultures and times, the younger the victims of terror and torture, the greater the impact of the story. This repetition is a prime example of a characteristic of atrocity stories which Lasswell notes – their lack of

⁵⁹ The atrocity stories to which Godwin refers in his novel were all well known during the war and included the boiling of dead bodies by the Germans to get chemicals from them and the crucifixion of the Canadian soldier (1930:239). He presents the stories as being part of a training lecture the effect of which makes one young Canadian soldier "quiver with rage".

⁶⁰ This story is repeated on the very next page with few variations. A drunken soldier was said to have bayoneted a child through the stomach "lifting the child into the air on his bayonet and carrying it away on his bayonet, he and his comrades still singing. The child screamed when the soldier struck it with his bayonet, but not afterwards" (Report 1916:52).

originality (1972:82). These tales of atrocity were widely spread just as the printers of the *Bryce Report* had requested they be.⁶¹ From the number of times the raping of Belgian women and killing of the children are mentioned in the media, cartoons, and fiction we can assume that the Report had a large impact on the Canadian public far removed, even though they were, from the events which were being described.

The soldiers, on the other hand, tended to be more critical of the stories. There was a distinct lack of respect among the men for printed information. Marc Bloch writes in his book, *The Historian's Craft*, "the prevailing opinion in the trenches was that anything might be true, except what was printed"(1954:107). This did not mean the soldiers were immune to the convincing power of rumours. Bloch explains that having no confidence in written forms of communication, there was "a prodigious renewal of oral tradition, the ancient mother of myths and legends" (1954:108). There was an expression used at the time, "Latrine Rumour," referring to "wild and unsubstantial stories and prophecies" (Brophy and Partridge 1930:135). The latrines were one of the few places where the men were away from the officers and could talk freely. Brophy says the British latrines were not quite as open and chatty places as the one described early on in the first chapter of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929:135). This novel, by Erich Maria Remarque, gives a wonderful picture of these "regimental gossip-shops and common-rooms" (Remarque 1929:15).

Bloch argues that the rumours did not start at the Front because the soldiers were too isolated from one another, but with those who brought the food to the front in the field

⁶¹ The reception of the *Bryce Report* in Canada is mentioned in Ralph Connor's novel, *The Major* (1917). This prolific author, the most widely read Canadian of his day, has his protagonist Larry speak of a change which came "over the heart of Canada and over his own heart. The tales of Belgian atrocities, at first rejected as impossible, but afterwards confirmed by the Bryce Commission and by many private letters, kindled in

kitchens because they were able to travel about. He explains that the soldiers would not have been as critical of the stories brought by these men because, just as in the Middle Ages, “we have faith in that narrator who, at rare intervals, brings us distant rumors over a difficult road” (1954:110).

3. Crucified Canadian: Whether Martyr or Myth, a Powerful Tool

One of the most often repeated and widely recorded stories of World War One was that of the crucified Canadian. It was an atrocity which gripped the imaginations of many story tellers and writers and found notable visual representation in the 1919 bronze statue, “Canada’s Golgotha,” by Derwent Wood (See Plate 2). The story presented the death of a soldier in the religious framework common to a majority of the fighting men. There were many different versions of what occurred. Some said it was one man who was crucified, an American or a Canadian, sometimes it was three or six (Morton 1992:2). The Germans said that the Belgians had crucified German soldiers (Tippett 1984:82). But most often it was a Canadian who was killed near St. Julien, the site of the first German gas attack on April 22 1915 during the Second Battle of Ypres. Over the years much thorough research has been undertaken to determine the truth of this story. The attempts to discover its origins began during the war, continued right after the war, and have carried on since.⁶² The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) produced a radio program within the series *Ideas* on the

Canadian hearts a passion of furious longing to wipe from the face of the earth a system that produced such horrors” (1917:366).

⁶² Most recently British historian Iain Overton has investigated this story as well as other myths of World War One in his doctoral dissertation and developed them into a televised history documentary. He asserts that the story of the crucified Canadian is true (Petrou 2002).

story as it related to Wood's sculpture (Feldman 1987).⁶³ The reality of the tale is of course, something that most of us would wonder about and this is the thrust of the *Ideas* inquiry. But what becomes clear from all the research is not its truth or falseness but people's recognition of the power of the story and their consequent efforts to interpret it towards their own ends. True or not, the story once born seemed to take on a life of its own. It became an unruly tool in the hands of the propagandists at the end of the war once they needed to turn their efforts towards convincing the public that this was the time for reconciliation.⁶⁴

An early reference to the "Crucified Canadian" was published in *The Globe* from the Canadian Press Dispatch on Thursday May 6, 1915 entitled "Canadian Crucified by the Germans?"

London, May 5, *The Morning Post* says that a Lieut.- Col. writing on April 29th says "The Canadians have done splendidly. But they are mad with rage because they say that they have found one of their men crucified. This is not mere camp gossip: a General vouches for the fact" (p.4).

The article, entitled with a question, draws on the status of "a" Lieutenant- Colonel and "a" General to defend the truth of the story.⁶⁵ Not only are the sources unnamed, these senior officers probably would not have been in the field themselves to see the crucifixion

⁶³ The program aired November 11 and 12 (1987) coincident with Remembrance Day.

⁶⁴ After the war in the 1920s and 1930s, when not only disbelief but cynicism and irony colored the general attitudes towards atrocity stories, the story of the Crucified Canadian was dismissed. A clear example of this was Sir Arthur Ponsonby's book *Falsehood in War-Time*, sub-titled, "*An amazing collection of carefully documented lies circulated in Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and America during the Great War*" (1928). Ponsonby quotes two articles from *The Times*, May 10 and 15, 1915 which write of the "ghastly" deed, followed by two excerpts from House of Commons debates of May 12 and 15, 1915 which refer to the "vile" act. He then confidently disproves the story (1928:92). Desmond Morton sums up this change of mind in his book on Canadian prisoners of war, *Silent Battle*, "From avid credulity, the public mind had swung to a resolute skepticism about 'atrocity stories,' which, for many, would last until the gates of Belsen were opened in 1945" (1992:4).

⁶⁵ A common technique used by propagandists is to use the figure of an "expert" to support any claim (Jowett and O'Donnell 1992:222).

and so would have depended on the word of others. The need to draw on the word of an officer and the denial that this was a piece of gossip presents the information in a defensive way as if to assume that some will not believe it. But through its repetition over the months and years in news, novels, and films it grew into fact which few of the general public would have questioned (Tippett in Feldman 1987:6).

The Canadian Chief Censor, Colonel Ernest J. Chambers, in charge of the Canadian Information Service began to investigate the story early in 1915. He received a letter from Rudyard Kipling on June 18, 1915 attesting to the truth of the story (Tippett 1984:82). This famous author was another individual with a great deal of status but not likely to have seen the sight himself.⁶⁶ Chambers searched for eyewitnesses. He found a Private who swore under affidavit to have seen three Canadian soldiers bayoneted to a barn door three miles from St. Julien. The Canadian General Sir Arthur Currie also investigated the story but concluded it was not true (Tippett 1984:84). In late 1917 the story made its way into the *Daily British Whig* of Kingston, Ontario via the American media with an American protagonist.⁶⁷ At this time Chambers felt that although the story may have been useful for recruitment in the United States, it should be “soft-pedal[led]” in Canada, which meant not reprinted. His reasoning for this was that it might be used by “certain sections of politicians actively engaged in encouraging certain sections of the community to avoid military duty” (quoted in Feldman 1987:6). Canadians were involved in an intense conscription debate leading up to the election of December 1917 with pacifists risking censorship to speak out

⁶⁶ Although Kipling had been a journalist for a short time, he was not a war “expert” in the manner of the other witnesses, the general and lieutenant-colonel. Still, he was appealed to as a witness because of his assumed reliability due to his status as an author – of fiction.

⁶⁷ The *Daily British Whig*, Canada’s oldest daily newspaper later adopted the name *The Kingston Whig-Standard*.

against this platform of the government. At the same time that the story could have been used for recruitment purposes in one context, in another, it could have been used to scare people away from enlisting.

In fact, “crucifixion” was used during the war to scare and punish the soldiers. It was more formally called Field Punishment Number One and was described by George Coppard, a private in the British Army (1969:76). The punishment consisted in lashing the offender to a wheel in public view. This form of punishment continued until 1917 when protests in Parliament forced the War Minister to end it (Coppard 1969:76).⁶⁸

The next time that the story of the crucified Canadian came to the attention of Canadian government officials was just after armistice during the exhibition of The Canadian War Memorial Fund collection which included Derwent Wood’s sculpture, “Canada’s Golgotha”. This collection came into existence as part of the Canadian War Records office in London begun by Sir Max Aiken. Originally from New Brunswick, Aiken became Lord Beaverbrook in 1917. He was a very successful businessman whose chief concerns were newspapers. He had wanted to have a record of Canada’s involvement in the war and firmly believed in the power of photography and film to be able to capture and convey the reality of the front. It was later, in 1916, that he decided that painting provided “the most permanent and vital form in which the great deeds and sacrifices of the Canadian Nation in the war could be enshrined for posterity” (quoted in Tippet 1984:23).

⁶⁸ The war cartoonist, Louis Raemaekers, flips the horror of this British punishment onto the Germans in his cartoon, “Europe, 1916” (See Plate 3) which shows the female figure of Europe tied to the wheel of a field gun (Raemaekers 1916:33). G.K. Chesterton, who wrote the accompanying commentary to the cartoon, compared the present torture of Europe with the ancient form of torture for martyrs. He said that the despair of the war was far worse because in the past those being tortured for their beliefs could accept conversion but in the Great War, “even the terms of surrender are unknowable; and she [Europe] can only ask ‘Am I civilized?’” (Raemaekers 1971:32). Another comparison with an ancient form of torture for martyrs is visually present in

“Canada’s Golgotha,” the 32-inch high bronze sculpture was known before the exhibit opened. It depicted a soldier nailed to a barn door surrounded by German soldiers jeering at him. The publicity package sent out by the Canadian War Records Office included a photo of the statue (Tippett 1984:81). The *Daily Mail* published the picture of the sculpture with the comment, “Canada’s sternest memorial to her sons’ sufferings in the war” (quoted in Tippett 1984:81). The show of war art at Burlington House was scheduled to open in January 1919 just before the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty. Clearly this anticipated work of art based on such a well-known story was going to be troublesome for those who wanted to arrive at a peaceful solution at the Versailles conference. One of those people was the Canadian Prime Minister, Sir Robert Borden. Borden requested further investigations into the veracity of the story. Two more sworn statements were presented, one seeming to count for a great deal because it was from a Victoria Cross winner and, finally, a name was attached to the victim, Sergeant Brant. Just at this time the German government formally requested that the Canadian government publicly acknowledge that the story of the crucified soldier was untrue or provide evidence of it.⁶⁹ The first official Canadian response to the Germans was that they had enough evidence to believe the story was true but when the Germans demanded a role in the investigation the sculpture was withdrawn from the exhibition. It was not shown again until the 1990s.⁷⁰

the cartoon. Europe’s hand hangs over a small fire which has turned it black as if she were being burned at the stake.

⁶⁹ Lister Sinclair comments in the *Ideas* program of the embarrassment the Canadians must have felt at the prospect of being investigated by the losers of the war (1987:9). What Borden was hoping for when he insisted on having a place at the conference as a separate entity from Britain, was to gain an international reputation for Canada at the peace table. Germany’s efforts to gain some control over the power of the story eventually came to greater fruition when the Nazis used it as an example of the horror of British propaganda lies (Morton 1992:4).

⁷⁰ The statue was exhibited at the Canadian War Museum 30 March, 1992 – 8 October, 1992 in the show “Peace is the Dream” and then again 20 December 1992 – 28 September, 1995 in the show “Conservation

Even though it was withdrawn from the exhibit in 1919, the Canadian government continued to look into the story but could never prove that the incident had occurred.⁷¹ When the historian Seth Feldman was researching the *Ideas* program in the records of the sculpture at the National Gallery he came across the name of Harry Band identified as having been crucified by the enemy. Although not exactly the same name as the Sergeant Brant, who was identified as the victim in 1919, it was quite close. Four years later, the *Vancouver Sun* ran an article entitled, "Kin of Crucified Soldier want Depiction Shown" (McMartin 1991). The article briefly went through the history of the story and the history of the sculpture culminating with the comment by the great nephew of Harry Band that he found it "interesting that people professed to be shocked by such an occurrence. Especially in today's climate. It's happening all over the world." Yet, "Canada's Golgotha" had such potential to incite powerful emotions that when Maria Tippet asked permission to include a photograph of it in an exhibition in 1989, her request was denied (Kennedy 1991). This was a result of the actions in 1930 of the acting deputy minister of militia and defense, H.W. Brown. At that time he asked to have the sculpture put into permanent storage "so that the government may be protected against the embarrassment of its being exhibited or photographed at any further time as the portrayal of an event" (quoted in Tippet 1984:103).

Both *The Ottawa Citizen* article of November 12, 1991, "The Crucified Canadian – a War Myth?," and *The Globe* article from May 6, 1915, "Canadian Crucified by the Germans?," raise the question of the truth of their subject matter. Through its history the

Is?". It was in the minister's office of the Department of National Defense 20 June 1996 – 2 July 1997 and was shown as a part of Canadian Museum of Civilization's show "Under the Sign of the Cross", 5 November 1999 – 18 March 2001.

⁷¹ Although there were many testimonies, the discrepancies in the witnesses' reports led to the story's dismissal.

story has been presented as crisscrossing the continuum between fact and fiction and moving with the politics of the times. Feldman's summing up of the story in the *Ideas*' program goes beyond questions of truth. "It's a story the sacrificial lambs tell to the people who thrive on sacrifice. But what really matters more is that they were all crucified – the soldiers, the civilians, all the story tellers, all the people who believed them" (1987:22).

This story presented the Canadian public with an image of one of their own sons reliving Christ's story of sacrifice. The Christian imagery was so strong that it overshadowed the fact that this was a soldier who was trained to kill. Instead, the audience during the war was left with the idea that this man, like Edith Cavell or any other Christian martyr, was to live on in their memory not because of his mere physical strength but for his spirit of sacrifice to the cause and for his bravery in facing death.

iii. Visuals of the War

1. Sacrifice: A Canadian Art Example

Another piece included in the Canadian War Memorials Fund Collection which depicts Christ's crucifixion is Charles Sims' painting called "Sacrifice" (1918)(See Plate 4).⁷² This was the most explicitly religious and nationalistic of the paintings and the most important in the collection and was to be the last image to greet the viewer in the planned war memorial art gallery in Ottawa which was never built (Oliver and Brandon 2000:11). The painting has the nine provincial crests across the top just above the horizontal bar of a crucifix. The Jesus-figure hangs on the other side of the cross facing away from the viewer and towards scenes of the wounded and dying on the battlefield and those left on the

⁷² The painting is large at 415.2 x 409.0 cm. (CWM 8802).

homefront. In the snowy scene of Canada at the bottom of the picture are the bereaved, the old, the very young, and women. One mother in black holds her infant in a white christening gown up above her. The child has just become a new member of the religion and the country involved in this great sacrifice. Looking back through the lens of time we can see this infant as next in the line of those who will be sacrificed in the coming war, but at the time the child was the innocence and promise of the future for whom the battle was being fought.⁷³

2. Louis Raemaekers' Cartoons: Christianity and Art for the Man of the World

The works of art in the CWMF collection, done during the war, connect ideas of Canada, the nation state, and the horrific sacrifice she made in the war, but most were not viewed until after the end of the war. More widely available visual images which promoted the war as just, linking Christian ideals with the Allies and satanic barbarism with the Germans, were found in the cartoons of the Dutch artist, Louis Raemaekers. These cartoons became known in Europe soon after the war began and because their political content threatened Holland's neutrality, Raemaekers was forced to move from his native Holland. He went to England and began publishing in *The Times* (Stopford in Garland Publishing Collection *Raemaekers' Cartoons* 1971:n.p.). Collections of his works were put out by the

⁷³ The scene at the bottom of "Sacrifice" is reminiscent of the grieving figures in another very popular painting in the CWRO collection, "The Flag," by Byam Shaw. Grieving women, children and old men stand around the bottom of the monument where a dead Canadian soldier lies. The soldier, holding the Canadian flag, rests between the hand-like paws of the monumental lion of Britain pictured only up to the chest. There is one woman, perhaps the mother of the dead soldier, dressed in black with her arms stretched up above her. Unlike the previous picture described, "Sacrifice," which shows a woman with arms held up, this woman's grasp holds no infant. The caption for this painting in the book published to accompany the show in 1919 reads: "A

publishing house of Hodder and Stoughton by permission of Land and Water in London, who announced on their booklets that they were “anxious to obtain the widest possible distribution for these Cartoons” (1915), likely with the same intent as that of the Canadian government regarding the dissemination of the *Bryce Report*. Hodder and Stoughton also published Raemaekers’ works in London, New York, and Toronto. Francis Stopford, the editor at Land and Water, states in his introduction to one volume of cartoons, that Raemaekers was “one of the supreme figures which the Great War has called into being,” and the type of Christianity which he expressed was “not perhaps of the theologian, but of the honest and kindly man of the world”(1971: n.p.). The power of his propaganda, published on both sides of the Atlantic, is summed up by Stopford, as “worth at least two Army Corps to the Allies.”⁷⁴

The religious influence in the cartoons is clear and often repeated. One example of a picture much like “Canada’s Golgotha” is entitled “Easter 1915” depicting Christ surrounded by laughing German soldiers, one of whom is placing a German helmet on Christ’s head (See Plate 5). This cartoon is dated close to the time when the Canadian was said to have been crucified and the event of the first German gas attack. Another one of the cartoons included in this volume is called “Thrown to the Swine: The Martyred Nurse.” Here the dead and bound body of Edith Cavell is shown surrounded by drooling pigs wearing German helmets (See Plate 6).⁷⁵ In the commentary to this cartoon the Dean of St.

memorial to those Canadians who willingly gave their most beloved for the honour of The Flag and the upholding of Freedom, Justice, and Right” (Konody 1919:Plate I).

⁷⁴ *Raemaekers’ Cartoons* includes commentary by well-known authors of the time facing each cartoon. A book similar in style to this one was published by Raemaekers in the United States entitled, *America in the War* (1918). Once again, each cartoon was faced with a page of commentary by American writers.

⁷⁵ Nowhere on the cartoon nor in the commentary was the name of Edith Cavell mentioned. Her death was so well known that mention of her name would have been superfluous.

Paul's states: "though not the worst of their misdeeds, this has probably been the stupidest. It gained us almost as many recruits as the sinking of the *Lusitania*" (1916:24).

Raemaekers' cartoons acted as illustrations for the *Bryce Report*. One called "Germany's Victims" shows a man cradling a tiny casket in his arms with the inscription below, "We find many well-established cases of the slaughter of... quite small children." This is signed, "Report of Lord Bryce's committee on German Atrocities" (1915:11). Another one, although not specifically mentioning the *Bryce Report*, refers to the same killings. In "The Massacre of the Innocents," a crowned and robed man holds his hands to his face in fear as he is surrounded by disembodied faces of crying children (See Plate 7). The commentary below connects the German acts of atrocity as told by the *Bryce Report* with a biblical villain, "Herod: "Are they crying 'mother' – or 'murder'?"

Raemaekers certainly did not have a monopoly on illustrating the atrocities described in the *Bryce Report*. On the subject of the use of civilians as shields, Bernard Partridge published a cartoon in *Punch* in which a German soldier stands, raising his hand and eyes upward, behind a woman and two tiny children while poking them in the back with his sword. The caption reads: "God (and the women)" and below this is the explanation, "Study of a German Gentleman going into Action" (1919:7) (See Plate 8).

Bernard Vaughan wrote the commentary on the Raemaekers' cartoon "The Very Stones Cry Out" that depicts a cringing German soldier accusingly pointed at by two stone figures of saints come to life with a burning cathedral in the background (See Plate 9).⁷⁶ He collected together most of the atrocities of which the Germans had been accused and packaged them as a sin against Christianity:

⁷⁶ "The Very Stones Cry Out" is a reference to Luke 19:40.

Not content to crucify Canadians, murder priests, violate nuns, mishandle women, and bayonet children, the enemy torpedoes civilian-carrying liners, and bombs Red Cross hospitals. More, sinning against posterity as well as antiquity, Germans stand charged before man and God with reducing to ashes some of the finest artistic output of Christian civilization (Vaughan in Raemaekers 1916:20).

Raemaekers drew the Germans in the image of the devil in many forms from dark, skeletal death to small, pudgy, and cowardly. By way of the latter, he minimizes the power of the enemy and pokes fun at them. In the 1971 introduction to the British version of *Raemaekers Cartoons*, Cynthia Behrman writes, “A paralyzing fear is probably the most dangerous of all situations for a soldier or for a nation, and the attempt to reinforce confidence by depreciating the enemy is, in moderation, useful and necessary” (1971:8).

iv. Pulpit to Novel to Poetry

1. A Word of Cheer: Interpretations From the Chaplains

The belittling of the enemy portrayed in some cartoons was not a common tactic used in the pulpits and written into the novels and poetry of the period. The authors of sermons and fiction often made use of more straightforward motivational messages of the need for sacrifice. Chaplains, at the front or at home, through their positions, gave divine support for their side in the war. This support was also written into much of the fiction and poetry of the time complementing the messages of the nobility of the battle that the public were receiving through stories of atrocities and martyrs.

Arthur Foley Winnington-Ingram, the Bishop of London, fully recognized the propaganda value of the death of Edith Cavell, as noted above, and in this sermon preached in Westminster Abbey on November 28, 1915 and later published as “A Word of Cheer” in

The Christian World Pulpit on December 8, 1915, he made use of the story of the crucified Canadian.

To save the freedom of the world, to save liberty, to save the honour of women and the innocence of children, every one...is banded in a great crusade – we cannot deny it – to kill Germans, to kill them not for the sake of killing, but to save the world, to kill the good as well as the bad, to kill the young men as well as the old, to kill those who have shown kindness to our wounded as well as those fiends who crucified the Canadian sergeant... (Winnington-Ingram 1915:353).

The Bishop ties together the Belgian⁷⁷ atrocities, mentioning the honour and innocence of women and children, with the story of the crucified Canadian to raise the ire of his audience to the point where they are willing to kill all Germans. Further on in the sermon he quotes a Scottish preacher's description of this war for "purity" and "freedom" as a "war of the nailed hand against the mailed fist." Where many would leave it at that, Winnington-Ingram goes further to make it explicitly clear that he "look[s] upon everyone who fights in this war as a hero, and upon every one who dies in it as a martyr." Winnington-Ingram was not alone in his rhetoric.

Reiterating this sentiment, Captain J.H. MacDonald, Headquarters Staff, Canadian Chaplain Service, was quoted in *The Times* of London as saying, "After my experience at the front... I should like to say that who fights for England fights for God, and who dies for England dies for God" (3 May 1916, p.6). Even by the end of the war there were still chaplains who were able to repeat this message. Chaplain and author, Alexander Ketterson, wrote of his belief that the Canadian soldiers who had died in the war had not died in vain, "Gallant soldiers, what a glorious death; brave Crusaders, you have died in a noble cause!" (Ketterson 1918: ix). Ketterson included these words in his introduction to a collection of

⁷⁷ He also mentions Poland, Serbia and Armenia.

“uplifting” sayings selected by Canadian officers to express their feelings. These little “gems,” as Ketterson describes them, are the epitome of “high diction.”

David Marshall includes a chapter about the war and the church in his book on the crises of faith in the Protestant churches in Canada (1992:156-181). He discusses a number of clergymen who went to the front to preach, some of whom made great efforts to adapt their services to deal with the despair of the men. One of the best known Canadian chaplains of the war, the fifty-three year-old Canon Scott, made efforts to bend a few rules, to be at the front with the men. When so many of the chaplains stayed well behind the lines, his presence alongside the men was respected, appreciated, and considered highly uncommon.⁷⁸ In Scott’s memoirs of the war published in 1922 he mentioned the importance of one of his acts in his capacity as chaplain.

I used to distribute little bronze crucifixes as I went along... I told the men that if anyone asked them why they were at the war, that little cross with the patient figure of self-sacrifice upon it, would be the answer. The widow of an officer who was killed at Albert told me the cross which I gave her husband was taken from his dead body, and she now had it, and would wear it to her dying day. I was much surprised and touched to see the value which the men set upon these tokens of their faith (1922:105).

Although Scott may have had empathy for the soldiers, his job was to help maintain a fighting force at the front and to do this he wielded the power of God and sometimes, women. In one of the cases where a man came to him asking to be sent behind the lines because of nerves, Scott relates how he told him that although he may have been a

⁷⁸ A clear indication of the prevailing attitudes of the men towards the chaplains was that expressed by Noel Chavasse, double VC winner and son of the Bishop of Liverpool. He saw them as smug, unable to communicate with the men and concerned only for their own safety. “As for parsons, they are no advertisement to the uplifting influence of the grace of God” (Clayton 1992:182).

“weakling” in the past, with God’s help he could become a hero and his mother and sisters would love him even more, “‘For’, I said, ‘All women love a brave man’” (1922:151).

There were other Canadian clergy who persisted with a conventional evangelical Christian message of “repentance, sacrifice, and salvation” (Marshall 1992:171). More often this kind of message was reserved for those at home as opposed to the soldiers at the front but not so for the evangelical-leaning Presbyterian minister, George Pidgeon, who was at the Front in 1918 with the Y.M.C.A. “The idea that atonement – that through sacrifice comes life – permeated Pidgeon’s message to the soldiers” (Marshall 1992:171).⁷⁹ Robert John Renison, a chaplain with the First Division and later Bishop of Moosonee and Metropolitan Ontario, felt that the war was “one of the shining moments of the great story of mankind” bringing out what was truly noble in people (Renison 1919:361). On the home front this militant idealism was encouraged and sustained by many of the nation’s churches “which like the churches of every belligerent nation mobilized all of their spiritual resources for battle” (Bliss 1969:39).

2. Eternally Glorious: Canadian Fiction and War

The messages of the nobility of Christian sacrifice in support of the war effort crossed over from pulpit to novel. For most of the novelists, the war added another dimension to the Christian ethics embedded in their world view. Dagmar Novak, in her study of Canadian fiction and war, *Dubious Glory*, argues it was for them

A holy war, a sacred cause, and a test of spiritual righteousness. Primed by the atrocity dispatches from London and Paris, they eagerly embrace the concept of

⁷⁹ This religious interpretation of the war was in keeping with the general outlook of the Y.M.C.A. which in its newspaper, *Canadian Manhood* (October 1917) described its support of sending soldiers to war “not as Canada’s army but as representatives of Christ” (in Hopkins 1918:254).

“Jesus in Khaki,” and represent the war as God’s battle with the devil and involvement in it as a manifestation of faith, the supreme act of decision and sacrifice for Christ. Central in their treatment is the view that to die in the conflict is to die for Christ (Novak 2000:22).

A prime example of this came through the pen of Charles Gordon, who as Ralph Connor, was a very popular Canadian novelist at the time although almost unknown today; and who created characters holding sentiments similar to those of Prince Edward Island novelist, L. M. Montgomery and her protagonists. Gordon had studied to be a missionary in Toronto and Edinburgh and worked as a Presbyterian minister in the west of Canada. He began to write fiction as a way to reach out to those who had little interest in formal religion. His novels were peopled by missionary heroes who stressed the “then popular themes of the nobility of sacrifice, moral regeneration and the influence of strong characters” (Wilson 1981:28).⁸⁰ He describes his war heroes in his novel, *The Sky Pilot in No Man’s Land* as being of the “noble company of martyrs” since they are “uncommonly like God, for He did the same thing. He gave Himself to us” (1919:256).

Novak argues that the Canadian novels of the war period fit easily into the romance tradition (2000:7-51). The compelling characteristics of romance are, as Northrup Frye suggests, that it

avoids the ambiguities of ordinary life, where everything is a mixture of good and bad, and where it is difficult to take sides or believe that people are consistent patterns of virtue or vice. The popularity of romance, it is obvious, has much to do with its simplifying of moral facts (1976:50).

⁸⁰ Gordon’s first book *Black Rock* had an initial print-run of 5,000 copies which sold quickly. Even by today’s standards these numbers constitute a best seller in Canada and he soon sold hundreds of thousands of copies when the American edition came out. Gordon had a big influence on his North American audience not only through his fiction but also on his speaking tours in support of the war that he went on while working for the Canadian government as a propagandist trying, among other duties, to draw the Americans into the conflict (Gordon 1938:286, 294-302). The close connection between Gordon’s fiction and his ideas promoted through his propaganda work is commented on by Novak. She notes that it was while he was involved in this work that he wrote his novels, *The Major* and *The Sky Pilot in No Man’s Land*, “and the ideas he developed were essentially the ones he was expressing from the public platform” (Novak 2000:11).

The authors were meeting the needs of the Victorian readers who were looking to find moral law in action. Canadian novelists of the war and post-war era were loyal to this perspective and maintained that “romance was reality” long after their British and American contemporaries had moved on to an ironic understanding of the war (Novak 2000:51).

Novak found that “even the diaries, autobiographies, and letters of those who were involved in the fighting were replete with the sentimentality and propaganda characteristic of the novels” of the war (Novak 2000:36). Lucy Maud Montgomery provides a clear example of the overlap between fiction and non-fiction in her work by having her ideas on the relationship between people and the divine appear in both her diary and her novel, *Rilla of Ingleside*. Soon after the beginning of the war, 8 September 1914, Montgomery wrote in her diary, “Oh, we all come back to God in these times of soul-sifting – humbly, starkly, unconditionally. Perhaps this is why this awful war has come. The world was forgetting God. It had to be reminded of Him” (Montgomery 1987:154). These sentiments were repeated through the voice of her fictional character who states,

We all come back to God in these days of soul-sifting, ... There have been many days in the past when I didn't believe in God – not *as* God – only as the impersonal Great First Cause of the scientists. I believe in Him now – I *have* to – there's nothing else to fall back on but God (Montgomery 1920: 125).

Montgomery saw the cause of the war as being due to a failing relationship with god. Writing in *Everywoman's World* magazine in 1915, she said she was not one of those who believed that “this war will put an end to war” because its cause was one of

moral degradation, low ideals, sordid devotion to money-getting... Nothing short of so awful a calamity as a great war can awaken to remembrance a nation that has forgotten God and sold its birthright of aspiration for a mess of pottage (Murphy et al. 1915:7).

A marked increase in Sabbath observance during the war indicated that people were grasping at something to help them make sense of the slaughter. The culture of religion provided a ready philosophical framework for questions concerning ethical actions. In Ralph Connor's book *The Major* the narrator talks about people's renewed thoughts about the meaningfulness of church.

On the first Sunday of the war the churches of Winnipeg were full to the doors. Men, whose attendance was more or less desultory and to a certain extent dependent upon the weather, were conscious of an impulse to go to church. War had shaken the foundations of their world, and men were thinking their deepest thoughts and facing realities too often neglected or minimized (1917:333).

As to what people heard when they went to church and how widely spread the message was, Connor carries on to say, "The newspaper press published full reports of many of the sermons preached. These sermons all struck the same note – repentance, sacrifice, service" (1917:335). In Connor's novel *Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* he specified what this sacrifice would look like in his description of the wounded, "At their country's bidding they had ascended that Holy Mount of Sacrifice, to offer upon the altar of the world's freedom their bodies as a living sacrifice unto God, holy and acceptable" (1919:174).⁸¹ They came back shattered but "unconquered and eternally glorious" (1919:174).

⁸¹ The purity of this sacrifice is reminiscent of Solomon bar Simon's description of Rachel's sacrifice of her children as discussed in Chapter One.

3. Why the Sacrifice? The Answer From Authors

The call for repentance and sacrifice in Connor's novel mirrors that of George Pidgeon's sermons. Canada's sacrifice was made clear with the devastating casualty figures in the daily papers, and Christianity, as Montgomery made clear, could be relied on to answer the question of why there was a need to repent. This answer ran parallel to the political explanations for the war. Just as Christ had been sacrificed to save humanity from their sins, so too were the soldiers being sacrificed to save a world gone wrong. In his sermons to the Toronto Bloor Street Presbyterian congregation, George Pidgeon presented the death of a soldier and the consequent grief to his family as "comparable to the agony of Christ's crucifixion and the sorrow it brought to his mother", for both had a higher purpose (Marshall 1992:163). John Oxenham's poem, written on a bronze plaque in front of the Newfoundland memorial at Beaumont-Hamel, France, asks the visitor to tread softly on "this vast altar-pile" where the souls of men went up to heaven to gain immortality.⁸² In his book *High Altars: The Battle-fields of France and Flanders As I Saw Them*, Oxenham states, "We do not look upon this war as a punishment sent of God – except inasmuch as all suffering is sin's own punishment. And punishment for all our falling away from the higher things we all undoubtedly deserved – and needed" (1918:76). On the last page of the book is a poem called "Time's Altars." Oxenham places the sacrifices of the war on a time-line which begins with B.C. 1914 when "Man sought redemption" through sacrifice. It carries on to A.D. 33 with the death of Christ, to the altars of World War One and then of the

⁸² At the time of the war Newfoundland was Britain's oldest colony and had raised its own army. During the Battle of the Somme July 1, 1916 at Beaumont Hamel, Newfoundland's total casualties were 733 out of 801 troops (Gwyn 1992:304). The poem on the plaque does not have a title but in his book *High Altars: The Battle-fields of France and Flanders As I Saw Them*, Oxenham calls it "Vimy Ridge" (1918:31).

future he reasons "if still the things of earth enthrall us... Then, of a surety, shall still worse befall us" (1918:78).

The idea that the war was god's justice paid out to those who had not led a truly Christian life was voiced by others as well in their efforts to understand how such a horrible war could happen. Montgomery, as noted above, wrote in her diary that "The world was forgetting God. It had to be reminded of Him" (Montgomery 1987:154). Later she wrote that she was happy her son was not old enough to go to war. Embarrassed at her selfishness for being unwilling to make this sacrifice, she says, "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" (Montgomery 1987:160).

She saw the "great crusade" of which Winnington-Ingram spoke, in quite literal terms where the enemy in this case was not just the "Hun" but the "Crescent." In her diary she wrote of the surrender of Jerusalem to the British,

It is wonderful to think that the Cross once more flies over Jerusalem, after so many centuries of the Crescent's rule. ... Surely the ghosts of all the old Crusaders should crowd the walls of Jerusalem tonight, with Coeur-de-Lion at their head to welcome the English conquerors (Montgomery 1987:233).

4. Poetry: The Lingua Franca of Christian Sacrifice

There were those who spoke much less willingly of sacrifice as an acceptable medium of communication between people and god. The poetry of Wilfred Owen, one of the most famous British poets of the war, is full of Christian imagery, although he had a very different perspective on the war from those who upheld the glory of martyrdom. Yet, for him as well as the others, the biblical language of sacrifice was their cultural lingua-franca. This is most obvious in his poem written during the war, "The Parable of the Old

Man and the Young.” This poem reworks the story of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac into a twentieth century battle scene: “Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,/And builded parapets and trenches there.” As in the biblical version of the story, Abraham is offered an alternative, a ram, to sacrifice in his son’s place. Unlike the biblical story, “the old man would not so, but slew his son,/ and half the seed of Europe, one by one” (1971:42).

A common image relating to Christianity in the paintings of the CWMF collection is bombed out churches inferring the horror of a war in which sacred places would be destroyed. Owen’s poem “Le Christianisme” speaks of a church which has been hit and buried under rubble. But in this case the high estimation of the place of the church is questioned for, instead of helping the men, it seems to be hiding. “In cellars, packed-up saints lie serried,/ Well out of hearing of our trouble” (1971:83). The ranks of the heavenly warriors of Christianity were not listening.

In a letter written in July, 1918, to a friend he described how he trained new recruits as if he were preparing them to live through Christ’s last days. He checks their feet, not for trench foot but “that they should be worthy of the nails... With a piece of silver I buy him every day, and with maps I make him familiar with the topography of Golgotha” (Owen and Bell, 1967:562). Fussell in his book, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, remarks that the “topography” of the battle-fields was covered in roadside calvaries with which the British, and likely the Canadians, would not have been familiar (2000:118). These symbols of sacrifice would have strengthened the interpretation of the battle-field as a sacrificial altar.

Siegfried Sassoon, a poet whose name is often mentioned in concert with that of Wilfred Owen, recognized the importance of Christianity as a support for the men even

after a loss of faith. His poem "The Prince of Wounds" asks, "Have we the strength to strive alone/ Who can no longer worship Christ?" (1983:19). His next question asks if the sacrificed soldiers have taken the place of a useless Christ, "Is He a God of wood and stone,/ While those who served him writhe and moan,/ On warfare's altar sacrificed?"

In a war that produced poems like poppies the most often quoted and most popular of all of them is "In Flanders Fields." First published on 8 December 1915 in *Punch Magazine*, these lines had been translated into so many languages in McCrae's lifetime⁸³ that he joked that only Chinese was left now (Prescott 1985:107). The poem was used "for recruiting, raising money, attacking both pacifists and profiteers, and comforting the relatives of the dead" (Prescott 1985:106). It is symbolic for Canadians now of their participation in the war, being sung and quoted every year on Remembrance Day, and it was used as propaganda in the election of 1917 to encourage that participation (Prescott 1985:106). Much of the power of this poem comes in the poignant demand of the last verse that its readers see the battle through to the end,

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

If the listener does not join the fight, then all those who have sacrificed themselves for this cause will have done so in vain. Because it was so effective in pulling the reader in to share the responsibility of the soldiers, it was used extensively in the United States when

⁸³ McCrae died of pneumonia 28 January 1918.

it entered the war (Prescott 1985:106). It was often printed with a poetic reply, one of them by R.W. Lillard responding, “The torch ye threw to us we caught” (Prescott 1985:106).

The poem has been inscribed in words and images on the parliament buildings and Canadian monuments – a topic to be discussed in Chapter Four. It is still used as a symbol of the war on the historic battlefields of the Western Front. The biggest, and arguably the best, museum of the war housed in the reconstructed Cloth Hall of Ypres is called “In Flanders Fields.” The poem gave the international emblem of the poppy to the war. The message of sacrifice and the need for future generations to remember has had great lasting power through this symbol.

This poem, along with one other by McCrae, “The Anxious Dead”,⁸⁴ was included in a volume *The Great War in Verse and Prose* published for use in Ontario schools. The collection gives a clear view of how Ontario school children were expected to interpret the war.⁸⁵ In the introduction to the book, the Minister of Education, H.J. Cody, reiterated the notion of sacrifice and debt to the dead saying,

Canada is dearer to us than ever, because it has been purchased anew at a great cost of precious blood...A better Canada,... will come if there is kindled in the souls of our citizens the same bright flame of sacrifice and service which burned so brightly in the hearts of Canada’s citizen-soldiers of the Great War (Wetherell 1919:xiv).

v. Soldiers of Peace: Where Images of Soldiers and Martyrs Overlap

In the language of sacrifice the soldiers were not trained killers, rather they were fighting for peace. In his description of the prevailing myth of the war in Canada, Jonathan

⁸⁴ This poem repeats the theme of “In Flanders Fields” that we the living have a contract with the dead which we must honour, “that we will keep the faith for which they died” (McCrae in Wetherell 1919:91).

⁸⁵ The writings were chosen for their ability to instill a strong sense of patriotism, and the editor, J.E. Wetherell, requested that the “prose extracts should be used in the reading classes, as often as is expedient” (Wetherell 1919:vii).

Vance describes the belief that the conflict “had been thrust on peace loving people who were defending the weak” (2000:136). As citizen-soldiers or, soldiers of peace, they were strongly supported by the propaganda of the time that never lost sight of the fact that the Germans had invaded Belgium. After the war this interpretation of the soldier was further promoted with the view that veterans were men who “deplored war” but if needed “would make any sacrifice to ensure a more lasting peace. The pacifist-soldier, then, was not a contradiction in terms” (Vance 2000:33).

That it was not a contradiction was clearly understood by *Saturday Night* magazine’s book review editor, Tom Folis. In to a review of Ralph Connor’s *The Major* at the time of its publication, Folis stated that the novel lacked a story compared with Connor’s other works, but it “represents Canada’s great response to the war” (Folis 1918:7). Folis was impressed by the hero, the only son of a Quaker mother, who finally decided to go to war while still maintaining his pacifism.⁸⁶ This decision meant that he was no longer a fool, but “a fighting pacifist” (Folis 1918:7).

Soldiers are depicted as sharing with martyrs the characteristic of being lovers of peace. A remarkable thing about martyrs, in the traditional understanding of the term, is that they can have an immense impact on furthering a cause without physically hurting anyone. They do not seek their own or anyone else’s death. It is through this peaceful means that they are able to strike a psychological blow at their enemy. All the might of the enemy is not enough to control the message sent to both sides of the conflict that they were unable to convince the man without weapons that they were right and he was wrong. All they get for their efforts is a dead body and a tarnished reputation. The Canadian and other

allied soldiers were presented by the propaganda system as defenders of the weak: of the memory of the women and children who were drowned when the *Lusitania* was sunk, of the executed Nurse Cavell, of the crucified Canadian, of the raped Belgium women and their bayoneted babies. By being characterized as defenders from the beginning of the war onwards the soldiers were able to appear as powerful as martyrs in their peace-loving ideals.

vi. Conclusion: From Compromise to Conviction

The Canadian public and soldiers were surrounded by the language of sacrifice coming at them from the pulpit, newspapers, novels, poetry, and art. The martyrology of Edith Cavell was widely reported and repeated in the Canadian press and resulted in the dedication of a mountain monument. The atrocity stories published in the *Bryce Report* and the tale of the Crucified Canadian mirrored the tales of torture found in the traditional martyrologies and served the same purpose – to lift the public out of complacency and into battle. The very accessible images of cartoonist Louis Raemaekers gave a visual representation of these horror stories thus adding to the impact of the tales. The atrocities were taken up by the chaplains serving overseas and added to their sermons to give the soldiers reason to carry on. Preachers, novelists, and poets at home assumed the right to give divine blessing to those fighting on their side. They provided a theological reason for the conflict – this is what happens when one turns away from god – and they gave clear direction to what act was necessary – sacrifice. These words and images surrounding people in Canada reduced the complexity of the issues and presented them in black and

⁸⁶ It will be seen in the next chapter that the theme of the “only son” is often repeated in fiction, advertising

white so as to make it easier for the audiences to build their convictions and dampen the desire for compromise.

The soldiers were not being attacked because they belonged to a particular religious faith. They were not offered the choice between death or conversion – an element often found in martyrologies, reinforcing a presentation of the act as being done in the name of a particular ideal or religious tradition. Even the curses they used, no longer focused on the power of the divine, were evidence of a disenchanted world. Instead of invoking the wrath of god on the enemy, they called forth the worst kind of human degradation they could think of to vent their feelings and describe their world. The predominant swear words were sexual in orientation rather than religious. As Brophy explained in his dictionary of World War One slang, “The obscenity satisfied, because the words blasphemed sex, even as war blasphemed life which is the child of sex” (Brophy and Partridge 1930:18).

The visions of glory and fighting for truth, justice and god which may have been in the eyes of many a young recruit at the start of the war were soon wiped clean. The language of sacrifice, although it did invade some of the writings of the soldiers, was for the most part superimposed upon the war and the men by those who were not fighting.⁸⁷ But for all that, the hope which Christianity promised, of death leading to a better life, must have given a moment of comfort to many. Certainly many of the mothers accepted the hope offered by this interpretation, either through faith or compulsion or lack of ready alternatives.

and propaganda – news stories.

⁸⁷ A wry depiction of the soldiers’ attitude towards those at home is shown in a Punch cartoon celebrating the New Year of 1918. Two soldiers hold up the New Year’s baby who is underlining the words “STICK IT” on a wall-poster (Punch 1920:197). The caption below the cartoon is, “TO ALL AT HOME.”

Chapter Three: The Mothers' Stories

i. Introduction: Evidence of the Noble Mother

Maternal pride, military achievement and a place in heaven were offered by the most famous of Canadian generals, Sir Arthur Currie, to the Canadian Corps before the final German offensive in 1918. In his address to the troops, he said,

To those who will fall I say 'you will not die, but step into immortality. Your mothers will not lament your fate, but will be proud to have borne such sons. Your names will be revered for ever and ever by your grateful country, and God will take you unto himself.' General Arthur Currie (Freeman and Neilsen, 1999:175).

Similarly, Mrs. Mason, one of the characters in Nellie McClung's autobiographical novel *The Next of Kin: Those Who Wait and Wonder* (1917) described the conflict thus,

This is a holy war – holier than any of the crusades – for the crusader went out to restore the tomb of our Lord, and that is only a material thing; but our boys are going out to give back to the world our Lord's ideals, and I know they are more precious to Him than any tomb could be!" (1917a:148).

McClung begins her book by telling about the conversations she had with women after the speech she gave to the Red Cross Society. She presents herself not as the author but the historian of this book, commissioned by these women during the war "to tell what we think and feel, to tell how it looks to us, who are the mothers of soldiers, and to whom even now the letter may be on its way with its curt inscription across the corner" (1917a:14).⁸⁸ These views of General Currie and the character, Mrs. Mason, are echoed in many other public opinions expressed at the time of the war and open a window not only to

⁸⁸ The inscription she speaks of is the words "Killed in Action" printed in red ink across the corner of an envelope addressed to a soldier in France which had been returned to sender, in this case his mother (1917:8).

the official justification of the sacrifices demanded by the war, but also to the extreme nature of the conflict and the role the mothers had to play.

The role of the mother of martyr is contingent upon the story of the martyr. The previous chapter has shown that although “martyr” was used less often by those outside the church to describe the soldiers, their death was considered by many as a sacrifice for God and country. And according to Jonathan Vance, “If Christ became the spiritual symbol of the ideals for which Canadian soldiers fought, an allegorical maternal figure became one of the most potent secular symbols” (Vance 2000:150). The proximity of this maternal figure to the sacrificed son shines a spiritual glow on the mother as well.

This chapter discusses the literary, historical, and visual art evidence indicating the high value placed on the willingness of mothers to sacrifice their sons for this “just and noble cause.” The similarities between their stories and those of the ancient mothers of martyrs are striking. The chapter analyzes material from the war period making use of the concepts of shame and honour in a manner similar to Nicoletta Gullace, who has written about the White Feather Campaign (Gullace 1997). Both the women of this campaign and the image of the mother of martyr were used to recruit soldiers, thus the analysis of the former provides some useful insights into the actions and attitudes of female recruiters in general. The materials to be discussed emanate from the propaganda and recruitment drives, advertisements, and fund raising campaigns that projected and depended upon an image of mothers giving their sons to serve. This context, that of messages using women to promote the war effort, provides the ground on which the stories of the mothers willing to offer their sons developed. A selection of mothers’ stories are used to illustrate the similarities between them and the stories of the mothers of martyrs. The most comprehensive of these

being Mrs. Hughes' article, "I Am A Proud Mother This Christmas" (Hughes 1915), and "A Mother's Answer to 'A Common soldier'" by A Little Mother ("A Mother's Answer" 1916) both explaining the worthiness of the sacrifice of a son.

The stories of the mothers during the war and the mothers of martyrs from other times and places are alike not only in their ability to recruit followers to the cause, but also in the type of honour accorded the mothers by their societies. In the case of more recent stories of mothers of martyrs from other parts of the world there is a record of honouring the bereaved mothers not only with respect but other kinds of remuneration. This is seen in Canada as well during and after World War One revolving around various pension programs, the devising and awarding of the Memorial Cross, or as it is better known, the Silver Cross, as well as the vote for women. The fact that bereaved mothers of Canada and mothers of martyrs both had public and private forms of recompense tied to their willingness to sacrifice their sons highlights the similarities in the way that the state, under extreme pressure, used the special mother-son relationship to promote its own ends.

ii. Propaganda and Recruitment: Messages Directed at Mothers

Early on in the war, the recruitment calls began to fail (Wilson 1977:xlix, note 72). The propaganda departments in Canada and Britain turned to women to help call up the men for service. The poster campaigns of these years bluntly used women in general to entice, shame, and cajole men to enlist. "Women of Britain say GO!", demands one of the best-known of these posters showing an image of a woman standing by a window hugged by a young woman and a small boy as they watch soldiers march off to war. There were other posters which directed their appeal in a more specific way calling on women

identified by their relationship to the recruits. One, for example, called on mothers and sweethearts: "Do you expect other mothers' sons to defend you and your sons?"

Sweethearts: If you cannot persuade him to answer his country's call and protect you now, DISCHARGE HIM as unfit" (Rickards and Moody 1975:19). An early recruiting poster of the war,⁸⁹ originating in England and used in Canada, pictured a white-haired woman with a firm expression dressed in black with her arm around a well-dressed young man. "Go! It's your duty lad. Join to-day" (CWM 56-04-11-083). This elderly woman is not specifically labelled a mother but it is likely she is to be understood as such for the depiction of mothers at this time was generally of older women.

Another British recruitment poster used in Canada depicts a woman in flowing robes with one bare shoulder and a veil on her head billowing behind her. She holds the scabbard of a sword offering the handle to the imagined recruit beyond the picture. Above her head are the words, "Take up the sword of justice" (CWM 56-04-11-087). And below her are the ocean waters with dead or dying bodies floating in front of a sinking ship. Although this woman appears as more of an Athena-figure urging men on to battle, there are women who appear in posters referred to as mothers who dress in the same type of clothing, thus amalgamating militancy and motherhood. In October 1917 *Everywoman's World*⁹⁰ printed a message from the Food Controller, the Hon. W.J. Hanna, asking women to sign a Food Service Pledge to limit their use of certain foods so there would be enough for the soldiers. The right side of the page states, "Thou Shalt Not Want. The Undying

⁸⁹ This poster is prominently shown draped over a recruiting table in front of Trafalgar Square, London in a photograph from 1914 (Barker and Jackson 1974:356).

⁹⁰ This monthly magazine was published in Toronto from 1909-21 and is described by John Craig as "the most popular and outspoken magazine of women's opinion in the era" (1977:89). By 1915 it was available by

Pledge of Canada's Mothers to Her Sons." This is balanced on the left with, "They Shall Not Pass. The Immortal Cry of Canada at the Second Battle of Ypres." The mother in her Greek robe, sandals on her feet, and hat saying "Canada" on her head, protects her soldier sons behind her while staving off the figure of Famine who wears a German helmet. This image offers women a parallel role to men in the war. They can fight the war and make sacrifices – in the kitchen.

The close ties between the British and Canadian propaganda and recruitment teams are evident in the use of poster images. The Canadian recruitment poster for the Irish Canadian Rangers Overseas Battalion, Montreal, for example, has a picture of an older woman sitting in profile in a chair in a black dress and lace cap with the caption, "Fight for Her" (CWM 56-05-11-091). The same picture was used as a British fund raiser with the caption "Old Age Must Come: so prepare for it in British War Savings Certificates" (CWM 56-04-11-072). As a recruitment image this woman presents a passive role, unlike the white-haired woman who urges her son to go. The more militant mother comes across in posters depicting Britain as the mother-lion and the countries of the Commonwealth as her cubs.⁹¹ One version of this image asks the question, "Are you answering the call?" The poster was used in the United States and advised those interested to apply at the "British-Canadian Recruiting Mission" in Minneapolis, Minnesota. (CWM AN 19820554-006). A

subscription in the United States, England and "foreign countries." It billed itself as the magazine for "the Canadian Woman who thinks and feels" and by 1917 had a circulation of 130,000.

⁹¹ The lion and the unicorn are on the heraldic arms of Britain. During the Victorian era the more feminine symbol of Britain as Britannia was also used. The posters conflate these images by presenting Britain as a mother lion. Having a mother lion call to her cubs to defend her is a reversal of the commonly-held stereotype of the relationship between the lioness and her cubs. She is usually the one who defends them with a fierceness no male can match. Despite this role reversal the image came out in various posters with the hope of recruiting even Americans in the role of devoted offspring.

very similar picture used on a British Recruitment poster calls to the men of the “overseas states” to enlist now (CWM 56-04-11-044).⁹²

Efforts at recruitment were not only directed through visual means but through the music of the times as well. In Barbara Norman’s study “The Music on the Home Front: Canadian Sheet Music of the First World War” (2001) on the National Library of Canada’s collection of Canadian sheet music of the war period, she states that “recruitment was a dominant theme, reflecting the intense pressure exerted by government and society to enlist” (2001). She also found in the songs a prevalent image of “the powerful role of the mother as recruiting agent” (2001). Although there were some songs which departed from this theme, a famous example being “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier,”⁹³ Norman writes that “even previously pacifist suffragette women rallied ‘round the flag and pressed their sons into service” (2001).

The onslaught of propaganda directed at women in Canada came when there was a steep decline in enlistment particularly after the huge casualty lists began to appear after the Second Battle of Ypres and the battle of St. Eloi (Wilson, 1977:xlvi).⁹⁴ The military authorities required that women give written consent for their sons and husbands to enlist.

⁹² A striking American poster image was that used by the Red Cross in a 1918 Christmas fund raising drive, entitled “The Greatest Mother in the World” by Alonzo Earl Foringer (Gilbert 1987:213). A woman is pictured sitting in front of a large red cross dressed in flowing white robes of a nurse with the emblem of the Red Cross printed on the forehead of the white cap and scarf she wears. The bare toes of one of her feet are shown at the bottom of the picture – reminiscent of the sandal-footed women of the Athena-figures mentioned above – and the expression on her face is, like countless images of Mary, sad but understanding. As an unmistakable pietà figure, she cradles in her arms a doll-sized wounded soldier wrapped with a blanket onto a stretcher. This image of a mother embodies both ancient Greek and Christian icons providing the viewers with reasons for why they should fight this war. The Greek world carries with it the ideas of the birthplace of Western civilization, the concept of democracy and the notion of freedom associated with it, while the Christian imagery points to the ethical system by which the majority in Britain, Canada and the United States professed to live.

⁹³ This song was written in opposition to the establishment of the cadet corps in New York schools (Norman 2001).

Although many women had been supportive of the war effort, it was known that there had been others unwilling to sign off their men even from the beginning of the war. This problem for the recruitment officers was overcome when the demand for written consent was revoked in August 1915.

The regimental recruitment league for the 123rd (Royal Grenadiers) Battalion Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF), was probably referring to this unwillingness when they mentioned “the selfish maternal appeal” which keeps a man at home. Their advertisement was addressed to “The Women of Canada” referring to them as “the mainspring of all masculine action.” “Make your son, your husband, your lover, your brother, join now while he yet retains the remnants of honour” (N.A.C., RG 24, v. 4301, file 2D. 34-1-59). Another example of the recognition of the power of the maternal figure to influence recruitment is found in an advertisement for the 118th Battalion published in the *Berlin News Record*,⁹⁵ 15 January 1916, which asked the question “Have You Mothered a Man?” It carried on to describe a real man as one who was wearing the King’s Khaki somewhere in France and who is “upholding the most precious right that Britains are heir to, the right of freedom.” Women are established as just as able as men to answer the call to arms and in this case they do so by giving a man to the front. The words directed to mothers appeal to them “not to use their influence against the enlistment of sons who are able to take their places with the men who are fighting for Freedom and Liberty and for civilization.” The men they encourage on are fighting for “the sacredness of Home and Womanhood” (“118th Battallion Poster” 1916).

⁹⁴ Enlistments (officers and other ranks) in the CEF for 1915 April – 7,415; May – 7,819 (Nicholson 1962:546).

By this time, while some women were being accused of holding back their men, others were thought to be far too forceful in their efforts to encourage men to enlist. The White Feather Brigade was the most obvious example of this. It began in England in August 1914 when Admiral Charles Penrose Fitzgerald asked thirty women to give white feathers to men not in uniform (Gullace, 1995:178).⁹⁶ The British-Hungarian novelist, Baroness Orczy, in her continuing efforts at recruiting men in Britain for the war, became closely associated with the White Feather Brigade. The practice spread throughout England and on into Canada.

Feathers were sometimes sent anonymously through the mail. In one case a “young gentleman” advertised in the *Berlin News Record* on 22 January 1916 seeking room and board. He received a letter in the mail with feathers in it and a note telling him that he could get free room and board if he wore a khaki uniform. He wrote a reply to the newspaper saying that he had been rejected because of his health but that his father and two remaining brothers (one had been killed) were in uniform (Wilson, 1977:xc). A story from *The Great War and Canadian Society: An Oral History* gives another version of the white feathers told by George Wilkes, who was living in Toronto at the time. He describes how the “ladies of Toronto” used a turkey feather duster filled with talcum powder to shower over anyone whom they thought was a slacker. He recounted how they mistakenly covered a young man who had lost a leg in service when he was only 16 years old (Read 1978:104).

⁹⁵ The name of the Ontario town “Berlin” was a casualty of the war. On September 1, 1916 it was changed to Kitchener.

⁹⁶ The notion of the white feather and its significance of cowardice came from the novel, *The Four Feathers*, by A.E.W. Mason (1921). If a game bird, bred for fighting, were to show a white feather on its tail, it not only indicated poor breeding but cowardice. In the story a young man who is too scared to go into battle during the Boer War is sent three white feathers by his comrades and when his fiancée finds out she leaves him (Gullace 1997: 189).

Other stories of young women pinning feathers on the wrong men quickly surfaced at the time. There was even one tale of a soldier who received a feather and a Victoria Cross medal on the same day (MacDonagh 1935:79-80, Gullace 1997: 179). Incidents such as this gave the campaign – already unpopular in the eyes of many -- a bad name. After the war even more stories came to light and formed the basis of an angry backlash against the campaign and the women who had been involved in it. In reaction to this backlash Virginia Woolf wrote that the prominence of the white feather stories had more to do with male fear than actual female activities (Gullace, 1997:180).⁹⁷ Her views coincided with what Nicoletta Gullace refers to in her recent article as the “Greenham Common” school of thought that “tended to dismiss the white feather campaign as primarily misogynistic propaganda meant to discredit women and hide the more significant achievements of feminist pacifists” (1997:180).⁹⁸ This type of feminist perspective is what Gullace believes is the cause for so little scholarship on the white feather campaign specifically and, in general, women’s participation in recruitment campaigns that rested upon their ability to shame men into service.

The recruiting posters mentioned above clearly show the state as taking on the guise of a woman, but this was a two-way street, for as women became involved in the recruitment campaigns they “donned the aspect of the state as they used their own physical and rhetorical power in the service of the crown” (Gullace 1997:186). Gullace shows how the identification of woman and state in the service of militancy contradicted the traditional

⁹⁷ In her article “White Feathers and Wounded Men,” Gullace does thorough historical research on the White Feather campaign in Britain. She concludes that there were many episodes of men being pinned with a white feather up to 1916 when the National Service Bill put conscription into effect thus ending official recruiting appeals.

view of womanliness (Gullace 1997:187). Although she was thinking of the white feather movement, this was also true for the mothers who encouraged their sons to be heroes. As a mother takes on this role of militancy she oversteps her traditional place and takes on a fearful image. She may be presented as nurturing her community in terms of seeing to its protection, but she is no longer protecting the life of her son – only his honour and, in consequence, her own honour.

This question of honour is clearly visible in many recruitment advertisements. An advertisement for the 123rd Battalion, for example, mentions temporal constraints on a man's honour as if his quota slips away as each day passes without him enlisting (N.A.C., RG 24, v. 4301, file 2D. 34-1-59). As well, a poster for the 118th Battalion attacks the mother's sense of honour, implying that if her son does not sign up she has raised a coward or a shirker (*Berlin News Record*, 15 January 1916). Lady Sifton, the wife of Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior during the government of Sir Wilfred Laurier, spoke to an editor of *Everywoman's World* of the potential fear a mother has that she may have raised a coward. When sympathy was expressed to her regarding her great sacrifice of having four out of her five sons in khaki, she replied, "It is very kind of you to express so much sympathy with me... but I feel I should need it more if they had not shown a disposition to enlist in their country's cause" (Sifton 1917:17). Just as in the stories of mothers of martyrs of the past, honour rests on the relationship between mother and son but in these cases, the relation of the mother's honour to her sexual purity was seldom openly discussed.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Gullace cites Claire M. Tylee as an example. Tylee's article "'Maleness Run Riot'- the Great War and Women's Resistance to Militarism," implies that all women were against the war but were powerless politically to prevent it.

⁹⁹ A woman's sexual purity was an issue for wives of soldiers with regard to their eligibility for financial support during the war from the Canadian Patriotic Fund. This fund was set up in 1914 based on similar funds

iii. What Can I Do? Messages in the Name of the Mother

While the state and organizations such as the Red Cross and the YMCA made use of images of honourable women as recruitment officers and fund-raisers and some women “donned the aspect of the state” through their efforts in the White Feather Campaign, other women placed their honour in the “service of the crown” through pledges and proclamations. The most famous of these, Baroness Orczy, founder of the Women’s Service League, published an article in the *Daily Mail* (Orczy 1914). “To the Women of England, the Answer to ‘What can I do?’” addressing the question of the role of women in the war. She asked women to pledge their word to “persuade every man I know to offer his service... and never be seen in public with any man who being in every way fit and free... has refused to respond to his country’s call” (Orczy 1914). The Baroness succeeded in enrolling 20,000 women to make this pledge and named them to the League’s “Roll of Honour” (Gullace 1997:192). Once again the question of honour comes up, in this case, defining what an honourable type of relationship was between men and women -- the men in uniform and the women supporting them. Sisters and sweethearts shaming their men to war, mothers offering their sons for sacrifice and speaking out proudly at their death, were an important part of the propaganda.

Much like the Women’s Action League, the Mother’s Union produced a pamphlet entitled “To British Mothers: How They Can Help Enlistment.” The first thing women were asked to do was pray and after that, to give their sons. A sense of urgency was given to the

collected in Canada during the Crimean War (1855-56) and the Boer War (1900) (Morris 1919:9). If a woman had a sexual affair while her husband was away, she risked having her children taken from her and/or her

request to give for "Not enough men are sent out and this largely because not enough mothers say to their sons, as one did lately, 'My boy, I don't want you to go, but if I were you I should go'." The mothers are informed of how they should react if their sons come home from war or if they are killed. In case of the latter, the mother

will have a yet deeper cause for thankfulness that he is among the long roll of English heroes,... [and] far better even than that – the welcome of the King of Kings will greet him- "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord" (Rickards and Moody 1975:20).

The thankfulness this mother writes of is also present in the article by E.A. Hughes published in the December issue (1915) of *Everywoman's World*. "I AM A PROUD MOTHER THIS CHRISTMAS And I Will Tell You the Reason Why."¹⁰⁰

Mrs. E.A. Hughes describes her reaction to the telegram she received from the British Government informing her that her son, "Private Danny Hughes died in action yesterday." Initially she was in a state of shock at receiving the Christmas-time telegram. But that "all passed and I was terribly, yet gladly sure that the messenger had not made a mistake... I am a proud woman this day and, more a proud mother. No other Christmas box would have been half so worth while" (1915:11). Because she cried at first she "could not see the triumph" that was hers.

I did not see the crown; the cross was omnipresent, Gethsemane was where I walked. But that has gone. I am a proud mother this Christmas. For I gave Canada

financial support being reduced. The belief in the necessity of the moral regulation of female dependants during the war carried over into the governing structure of the Mother's Allowance programs after the war.
¹⁰⁰ Mary Macleod Moore also wrote of the pride felt by Canadians at Christmas 1915 in her *Saturday Night* article in the women's section entitled, "What This Christmas Means to Canadians" (25 December 1915). It was a "heartbreaking" time "because from end to end of that vast country, pulsing with high patriotic feeling and glorious by self-sacrifice, there are men and women mourning for sons, lovers, husbands, brothers" but for Canada this moment is also "proudest because the whole country, including the bereaved, exults in the fact that young Canada counted life itself but a small thing when the trumpet's call was heard" (25 December 1915).

and the Empire a Christmas present. I gave them my chiefest possession. I yielded what was more than aught else in the world to me. I sacrificed the life of my boy.

Although no reference to martyrdom is made, the association with Christ's death is explicit. Mrs. Hughes was able to overcome the pain of sacrificing her son and feel the joy of the resurrection and the worth of the sacrifice. And like other mothers of martyrs discussed in Chapter One, she takes full responsibility for the consequences of following her beliefs when she claims "I sacrificed the life of my boy." Like the nurse in the Red Cross "pietà" poster, she has become "The Greatest Mother in the World." To tug further on her readers' heart-strings, Mrs. Hughes tells us that Danny was all she had. "The rest, his Dad and a wee baby sister and a brother had all been taken."

This story is presented as autobiographical. The style, although highly melodramatic, would not have seemed so out of place alongside the propaganda surrounding the reader at the time. In the centre of the piece is a dramatic drawing rather than a photograph. We see a woman, presumably Mrs. Hughes, with her hands to her face leaning over a table while her son reaches towards her from behind. The caption under it says

'Oh, Mam,' he burst out again, 'I've got to go. I can't stay here, working and eating and sleeping and playing tennis and paddling and all, when the rest of the fellows are fighting, fighting for their mothers and fathers, fighting for England there, and all the vaster England in Australia and Africa and Canada.'

The melodrama in these lines makes them sound to a modern reader remarkably like an old Hollywood movie script.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Not surprisingly, American movies made during and about World War One had as their most prominent female role that of the mother. Isenberg writes of this role in his book *War on Film*, "If at times she grieved over her lost soldier boy, her role also was interlaced with the idealization of motherhood as a biological

Mrs. Hughes tells us that Danny enlisted with the 15th Battalion which was one of the first contingents to leave Valcartier, Québec, in late 1914. They spent the winter training on Salisbury Plain and left for France in the spring of 1915. Now, unlike 1915, it is easy to check the attestation papers of the Canadian Expeditionary Force as well as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission registry. There was no one with Danny's profile who turned up in either case. It is possible that Danny is a fictional character dressed with plausible details and designed for emotional impact on an audience receptive to this message.

The enemy is never mentioned directly – at least in human form. What prompts this young man to enlist is a story told by a girl of her brother's death from "that damnable gas". The use of the "evil" gas, outlawed by international convention, was considered truly horrific in this time as it is now even in an age knowledgeable of the atomic bomb. As in most martyrologies, the hero is forced to face death in the defence of his community and his values and he knows he is on the side of ultimate justice.

Less than a year later, in September 1916 a similar story was published in the British newspaper of London, *The Morning Post*, entitled "A Mother's Answer to 'A Common Soldier'" by A Little Mother.¹⁰² It had three subtitles: "A Message to The Pacifists. A Message to the Bereaved. A Message to the Trenches." Robert Graves quoted the letter in full in his book *Good bye to All That*, commenting in his preface to the letter

sanctification of the national spirit"(1981:191). He argues that their role in the war effort was to bear sons to send off to fight. The depiction of their fertility as sacred was, he believed, more of a European concept than a reflection of American values.

¹⁰² *The Morning Post* had a long history in London, beginning in 1772. Its chief competitor for the upper-middle class market was *The Times*. Although remembered as a conservative newspaper, it supported such institutions as income tax and national education. In general it reflected both British society and its taste in literature. Rudyard Kipling, famous during the Great War, was one of its well-known contributors (Hindle

that the editor of *The Morning Post* reprinted the letter in pamphlet form and sold 75,000 copies of it in less than a week (Graves, 1966:202). Just as Mrs. Hughes only had her Danny to give to the war effort, this “Little Mother” only had one child. The storyteller’s inclusion of the fact that the mother only had one son serves both to increase the pain of loss and compare the mother to Mary and her only son who was sacrificed. The Little Mother wished to speak out, for “we who mother the men” have the most important job in the world, of “uphold[ing] the honour and traditions not only of our Empire but of the whole civilized world.” She is clear about how the mothers are to accomplish this task,

We women pass on the human ammunition of ‘only son’ to fill up the gaps, so that when the ‘common soldier’ looks back before going ‘over the top’ he may see the women of the British race at his heels, reliable, dependent, uncomplaining” (in Graves 1966:203).

Women are fulfilling their natural destiny in this role, for they “are created for the purpose of giving life, and men to take it. Now we are giving it in a double sense” (in Graves 1966:204). All she asks for the mothers who have sacrificed their sons is that they be allowed a moment of quiet to share “the lonely anguish of a bereft heart” with the biblical mother of an only son, “Rachel the Silent”.¹⁰³ The mother informs her reader that

1937:1-6). One of the editors of *The Morning Post* was Fabian Ware, who went on to head the Imperial War Graves Commission.

¹⁰³ In the Genesis story Rachel’s love, Jacob, is first married off to her older sister Leah by their father. Jacob has children with Leah but when he is finally allowed to marry Rachel she is barren. She agonizes over this saying to Jacob, “give me children, or I shall die!” (Gen. 30:2). Finally she gives birth to Joseph. Rachel, like other biblical women before her waited so long for that which would give meaning to her life. The story illustrates the importance of childbearing to Jewish women of the ancient world. By likening the mothers of the soldiers to Rachel, the Little Mother tells the reader how dear their sons are to them. The story in the Hebrew Chronicles of Rachel, who sacrificed her four children, as discussed in Chapter One, would also have drawn up the image of the biblical mother through the repetition of her name.

women can attain honour through bearing sons, training them and setting them off to war.¹⁰⁴

Graves follows up the letter with "Extracts and Press Criticisms." These are quotes from newspapers and personal letters all praising the worthiness of the sentiments of the letter and commenting on how it had spread. One letter from "A Bereaved Mother," describing her emotional reaction, is reminiscent of the joy Mrs. Hughes expressed in giving her son to her country. "I have lost my two dear boys, but since I was shown the 'Little Mother's' beautiful letter a resignation too perfect to describe has calmed all my aching sorrow, and I would now gladly give my sons twice over" (in Graves 1966:205).

These are exactly the words the recruiters wanted to hear, and furthermore, the comments Robert Graves made just prior to quoting the letter would lead one to think that these sentiments were well ingrained in the home-front population. He described a "war-madness" resulting from the desire for a "pseudo-military outlet." The outlet which people found was in their stories. He described them as speaking a "foreign language; and it was newspaper language." In other words, it was the language of propaganda. This is what his parents were speaking, which he felt made it almost impossible to have a "serious conversation" with them (1966:201). Graves' words are reminiscent of the backlash which arose in reaction to the white feather campaign. His anger with the Mother's letter was augmented years later in Elshtain's book, *Women and War* (1987), when she refers to the Mother's Letter as the most "notorious" example of mothers' being drafted into the

¹⁰⁴ Stories of women gladly giving their sons to the war effort came up in advertisements as well as recruitment drives, propaganda, and newspaper articles. *The Times* of London printed an advertisement for the Women's War Time Fund of the Young Women's Christian Association asking for money to build hostels for the female munitions workers ("Women's War Time" 1916). Under the picture of a woman working with shells is a quoted testimonial, "They have already given of their best. One woman whose only son has been

propaganda service. Although including Graves in her comment, she seems to be even more incensed by it than he was.

Baldly proclaiming a sentiment carved on the mangled bodies of others, possibly her own son, 'A Little Mother' expresses bloodcurdling patriotism coated in vapid and lifeless pieties. Graves could not believe it; nor can we. But eager thousands did, including many mothers who saw themselves refracted through the Little Mother's 'longing for Spartan motherhood.' (Elshtain 1987:193).

In this reference to the Spartan mother we can see how the pendulum of social attitude has swung from reverence of her bravery in Amar Singh's writing of 1906, to disgust of her patriotism by 1987, from the ability of thousands to believe in the story, to present-day incredulity.

iv. Issues of Credibility

1. One Part Fiction and Three Parts Fact: Blending of History and Fiction

The subject of belief is a particularly interesting one at a time when propaganda surrounded readers and the Chief Censor asserted his control over the minutiae of the printed word. It was a well-worn joke in the trenches that you could believe anything except what you read. However, Jonathan Vance has clearly shown in his book *Death So Noble* (2000) that those on the Canadian home-front lived with the myth about the war of which his title speaks.

Like the eager thousands of believers to which Elshtain refers, the Canadian readers of Mrs. Hughes' story were probably just as keen to accept it as truth. Readers at the time were willing to believe a story if its sentiments rang true regardless of the factual details.

killed writes: 'I only wish I had more sons to give to England.' She is now working in a munitions factory 12 hours a day."

Maybe this was the reaction Harold Lowrey was counting on in his story, "His Unknown Mother: The Story of a Victoria Cross." He declared that it was "one part fiction and three parts fact." Terrible Terry O'Malley, a giant devil of a man, is adopted at the train station just as he was leaving for the front, by a little old lady who lost her only son at St. Julien, the site of the first gas attacks.¹⁰⁵ She was able to inspire terrible Terry to great Christian deeds and he dies earning the Victoria Cross with just enough time before his last breath to say to his friend, "Jack, tell Mother I've kept faith, I'll wait for her in Hiven (sic)" (Lowrey 1918:28). She is claimed by the whole of his battalion to be "the Empire's greatest and noblest Mother"(1918:6). Having made the right choice to inspire her boys in battle, her mother-love is deemed to be unselfish.

Lowrey was not the first to claim the Canadian reader's attention with this story.¹⁰⁶ A year earlier Nellie McClung's book *Next of Kin* included a chapter called "War-Mother." Once again a tall gruff soldier is adopted at a train station by a little old lady who has lost her sons – two this time – on the battlefield.¹⁰⁷ The main difference in this earlier version is that the mother seems to be in the habit of adopting soldier boys and inspiring them to great acts of courage.

Maybe Lowrey's story is a simple case of plagiarism but it was not just the story that he copied, it was also the idea of the fusion of fact and fiction. In the forward to

¹⁰⁵ Just as in the case of Mrs. Hughes, we have the poignant case of an only son, and the horror of the enemy is summed up in the idea of poison gas.

¹⁰⁶ Magnus Hirschfeld made reference to a popular institution which developed most fully in France, that of the *marraines* (god-mother or adoptive mother) (1941:75). It began early in the war when women began knitting socks and sending letters with their parcels to the men. Some realized that there were men with no family and so they offered to act as mothers for those without. He says the institution took on an erotic tone for a time but then was taken over by old women and little children writing to the soldiers.

¹⁰⁷ In a war fought in the trenches it was not an asset to be tall. The mention of the height of the soldier in both stories would not have been an indication of a happy ending.

McClung's novel/war-book ¹⁰⁸ her narrator, who had just spoken at a Red Cross meeting of women, says to them,

Remember that you women to-day made me promise to write down how this war is hitting us, and I merely promised to write what I heard and saw. I am not going to make up anything, so you are all under obligation to tell me all you can. I am not to be the author of this book, but only the historian (1917a:17).

The permeability of the border between fact and fiction concerning the stories of mothers of the fallen refers back to time-honoured questions which concerned the historians of ancient Greece. As stated in Chapter One, Aristotle's separation of history and tragedy was really an "aberration, not the norm" (Doran 1981:86). Even the historians Herodotus and Thucydides relied on being able to draw on their audience's emotions although they seldom admitted as much (Doran 1981:86). On the part of the audience, what is accepted as fact has to do not only with how the story is presented but, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the climate of tension that Mrs. Peel asserted "upset our judgement and made any event seem possible" (1929:43). In addition to this tension felt by readers at this time, many must also have felt an intense and overriding need for an interpretation of the loss that they were experiencing that would provide consolation. Together these features lent credibility to stories which audiences might not otherwise have paid attention to.

¹⁰⁸ The perception of a blending of history and fiction in this book is apparent in how it was categorized in *The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs*. The book was listed under both the "Canadian Books on the World-War" which included many books by military officers, and under the category of "Fiction and Novels" (Hopkins 1918:15). In a review at the time the book was published, Tom Folis, editor at *Saturday Night* magazine took the opportunity in his review to blast Nellie McClung for her suffragette ideas thus dealing with the book more as an extended essay than as fiction (June 1919:9).

2. If the Grief is Ours the Glory is Theirs: Spartan Mothers of the Twentieth Century

It is this need for strength and consolation at a time of great grief which brought to the fore many references to the Spartan mother. When Elshtain refers to The Little Mother's longing for "Spartan motherhood" she assumes her readers are well aware of the story of the mother from Sparta who counselled her son to return from battle to her either with his shield or on it. Although the reference here is Elshtain's and not that of The Little Mother, it is a story which surfaces many times in the literature of the war. It represents the epitome of the willingness and pride a mother can take in risking her son's life for his community and was used to illustrate both the height of patriotic fervour and, for those not supportive of the war effort, the depths to which propaganda could sink. An example of the latter attitude was presented by Gertrude Richardson, an English woman who moved to Swan River, Manitoba in 1911. Richardson began her writing career in England publishing anti-war articles in *The Times* about the Boer War and continued in Canada, contributing to the socialist newspaper, *The Canadian Forward*,¹⁰⁹ the voice of the Social Democratic Party. In an article entitled "Motherhood and War" she referred to a leaflet poem she had received from Fannie Buxley in California called "The Spartan Mother." "I know mothers who would send their sons to war. I read with a shudder the other day of one who said she 'would just push her son back into the trenches if he tries to escape.' God help the world if such an ideal of motherhood were to triumph" (1917b:5).¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ This avowedly anti-conscription and anti-war newspaper did have a difficult time with the censors. Richardson tells us that Mr. I. Bainbridge, the editor, was imprisoned on the charge of circulating literature with intent to prevent recruiting and circulating seditious libel (Richardson 1918:6).

¹¹⁰ This same shudder runs through Siegfried Sassoon's poem "The Glory of Women" first published in 1917. Although not mentioning the Spartan Mother directly, he echoes the above sentiments. "You love us when

The journalist Michael MacDonagh, who also wrote for *The Times*, published his diaries of the war in which he states that on April 22, 1915 "I have met the Spartan mother who grieves not for her son killed in the War, but glories in his fate. Calling on her today to give her my condolences, on the loss of her son, aged eighteen, who has fallen in battle, she told me she felt no grief, only pride that a boy of hers should have died for his country, and I could see that her pride was all the more intense for the deep love she bore him" (MacDonagh 1935:60). MacDonagh sees this stoicism as "almost unnatural." There are other mothers he describes who, like the Spartan mother, do not complain when their sons are killed but in them he sees rage "in their hearts at what they regard as the purposeless sacrifice of their sons. Lost! Wasted!" (MacDonagh 1935:61). His implication is that the reaction of these mothers is more natural.

The Spartan mother would not have simply used words to describe her pride in her son's heroic death but also her physical demeanour.¹¹¹ This is alluded to in *The Globe's* article entitled "When bowed head is Proudly Held" ("When bowed head" 1916:10). Beyond the title's suggestion of comportment, it tells of a request made by the National Council of Women asking women who have lost men in the war not to wear black "but a band of royal purple on the arm to signify that the soldier they mourn died gloriously for his King and country." It was thought that too much black might discourage enlistment.

we're heroes... You worship decorations;... You can't believe that British troops 'retire' /When hell's last horror breaks them, and they run, /Trampling the terrible corpses – blind with blood"(Sassoon 1983:100). The mother in another of his poems, "The Hero" first published a year earlier, is not presented so venomously but rather as a deluded woman. She is told a lie about how her son died a hero's death and to this description of heroism she responds, "We mothers are so proud/ Of our dead soldiers" (Sassoon 1983:49).

¹¹¹ The ancient Greek states had designated time limits governing the behaviour of mourners, most of whom were women. As one might infer from the story of the Spartan mother, Sparta allowed the shortest time -- 12 days (Loraux 1998:31, note #8, 32).

A reference to the Spartan Mother that glows with all the sparkle of propaganda is included in *Private Warwick: Musings of a Canuck in Khaki*.¹¹² The young Private's girlfriend, Fanny, cried when he told her he had enlisted in Winnipeg. But after the two of them had attended a church service in which the parson "brightened up his sermon with the anecdote of the Spartan mother," Fanny was so moved by the story that, as he described it, "she could almost see yours truly being carried into Westminster Abbey *upon* my shield" (Wodson 1915:15).¹¹³

We are told in the Preface of the other protagonist in the story, Private Warwick's mother. She is to "be found in ten thousand homes in Canada... [she] who has given to the Empire that which she loves best." The book includes a number of letters from Mrs. Warwick to her, once again, *only* son Richard, while he is in training in England. In the first one she reminds him of how he used to play with his grandfather's medals from the Crimean War. She had brought him up with stories of his grandfather's heroic fighting and death for England and so she felt it was in her son's "nature" to want to "wear the King's uniform" (Wodson 1915:20). However, she did not feel his desire to go into service was entirely inherited. She saw herself as the one responsible for his lessons on the value of war, both in this world and as a "soldier for the King of Kings" (Wodson 1915:23).¹¹⁴ She

¹¹² The author, H.M. Wodson, admits his book is fiction but states that it was inspired by two young men and he "believes there are many Private Warwicks bringing glory to Canada" (Wodson 1915: preface). Wodson does not instruct his reader as Lowrey does regarding the ratio of fact to fiction in his tale but he is careful to say it is based on the lives of real men and real mothers.

¹¹³ Another "light-hearted" reference to a female character shaming a man towards enlisting is included early on in *Private Warwick's* musings as he describes meeting a married man in khaki walking down the street with his wife and children. She said that just because some men were not signing up to save the Empire did not mean that married men had any excuse. Warwick remarks that if a manhole had been in front of him it would have been appropriate to drop into it. "It takes a woman to stick the bayonet into your vitals, and to give the steel an artistic twist. *Women of that type breed fighting men*" (Wodson 1915:9).

¹¹⁴ A non-fiction example of a mother claiming responsibility for having taught her son that England was worth fighting for is the compiler of the small volume *Mainly for Mother*. The book consists of the collected letters of Armine Norris sent to his mother while he was serving overseas. This mother, like Mrs. Warwick,

quotes a song he used to sing as a little boy, which we must assume he learned from her: “I am a little soldier,/ And only five years old;/ I mean to fight for Jesus,/ And wear a crown of gold” (Wodson 1915: 95).¹¹⁵ To see him enlist was a reflection on her ability as a cultural teacher of morals and values. She thanked him “for giving [her] the *honour of being the mother of a young Canadian patriot*” (Wodson 1915:23). Once again, we see the bond of honour joining the militant mother and son.

Mrs. Warwick leaves no doubt about her views on the righteousness of the cause for which her son is fighting. This strong faith is what allows her to overcome her “selfish” mother love.¹¹⁶

It is hard and I sometimes grow faint, but this is a just war, and the sword of God is in Great Britain’s hand. The battle is for freedom, and God is the God of freedom. Of what worth are a mother’s sacrifices in the rearing of her sons, if they do not make men noble and brave, and ready to make sacrifices for others? If my son should fall in battle, Christ’s words will comfort me: ‘Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (Wodson 1915:45).

During the war Canadians were subjected to, and moved by, images of motherhood which joined ancient Spartan ideals to those of Victorian Christianity, but not all information directed at women was asking them to support the war. The National Committee of Patriotic Service, Council of Women received what they referred to with some horror as “peace propaganda” which “call[ed] upon women all over the world to stop

was a soldier’s daughter who passed on her belief that the right to fight for England “was a privilege to rejoice in” (1919:9). There is something of the Spartan mother in Mrs. Norris as well for when she speaks of her mourning she says, “let us remember to rejoice and be proud, for if the grief is ours the glory of great accomplishment is theirs” (1919:8).

¹¹⁵ It sounds as though the character of Mrs. Warwick had been influenced by the how-to moral conduct books previously mentioned in the introduction, which were so popular in the Victorian era and which gave suggestions as one title pointed out to *The Training of Children for Usefulness and Heaven*.

¹¹⁶ The selfishness of mother-love is the topic of the editorial from *Everywoman’s World*. “Though it have selfishness at its base, mother-love is the sweetest, strongest, passion in the world” (“Mother-love” 1915:3).

the war" ("National Committee" 1915:23). The Council's response to this literature and its proposals of a peaceful solution to the war was that peace now would give victory to Germany. A few months later the Secretary of the National Committee of Women for Patriotic Service, Mrs. Plumptre, published her letter to the International Congress of Women at The Hague (Plumptre 1915:21). She stated that the committee members, themselves leaders of nationally organized groups of women, were unable to accept the invitations to the congress because none of them believed the time for peace had come. The final paragraph of her letter joins the themes of ultimate values, democracy, and war:

We would ask you once more the old question, "What shall a man or a nation give in exchange for his soul?" The soul of any nation is the value that it places upon the defence of the weak, the freedom of the many, and the keeping of its plighted word. It is to preserve our soul as an Empire that we are at war (Plumptre 1915:21).

v. Conscription: A Different Measure of Women's Support for the War

There were some Canadian women who were vocally devoted to the cause of pacifism and when conscription arose as the main issue of the December 17, 1917 federal election, they spoke out powerfully against it. In some cases those who argued against conscription did so by asserting the right of women to be heard on this issue on the basis of their power and skills as mothers. Gertrude Richardson published an article in *The Canadian Forward* entitled, "The Cruelty of Conscription: A Letter to Women" (1917a:5). Richardson had an expanded notion of motherhood which she later clarified as including all women, whether or not they had children, for she believed motherhood to be based on a "deep, spiritual possession, a love for humanity, a glorious self-giving longing to protect, conserve and guard and save" (1917a:5). She asked women with "mother-hearts" to stand

As in the recruitment leagues' literature, the power the maternal hold has is appreciated with ambivalence.

up against conscription. Appealing to her reader's emotions, she introduced her letter with a poem that she said was found on the body of the author who was killed on the Somme. It began by asking "Who made the Law that men should die in meadows?/ Who spoke the Word that blood should splash in lanes?" (1917a:3). Towards the end of the letter she tells of the women of Germany who protested against the war and were "bayoneted, sabred, shot" for their beliefs and because of this "they are for all time the example to all true motherhood"(1917a:3). Here true mothers are presented as those who are against the war and against conscription.

Flora MacDonald Denison, of the Canadian Suffrage Association wrote an article in 1914 on "War and Women" in which she argues that women

have made the homes in which all sons are born, and they know the cost of life. Every man who went to battle meant that some women had gone down into the valley of suffering to give him birth. Women paid the first great price and at last women are demanding that she have some say as to how her property and her sons shall be treated (1976:251).¹¹⁷

She was against the war and asserted that if democracy had included women, there would not have been a war.

Frances Marion Beynon, the woman's editor of the *Grain Growers Guide* and author of the column "The Country Homemaker," maintained a pacifist stance throughout the war. The Guide was popular in the western part of the country and "had a significant influence on the ideas and values of the women of the West."¹¹⁸ Her outspoken condemnation of the war eventually led to her leaving the *Grain Growers Guide* and the

Although a sweet love, it must adapt to the needs of the time and release the young men to go to war.

¹¹⁷ This article, originally published by the Canadian Suffrage Association (1914:2-7), has been reprinted in *The Proper Sphere: Woman's Place in Canadian Society*, a collection of articles edited by Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson (1976).

country, but not before publishing a strong anti-conscription essay, "Women's View of Conscription, 1917" (Beynon 1976:252).¹¹⁹ She claims, by way of her title, to be speaking for all women and although there is evidence to disprove this, there were powerful arguments written by women against conscription. This issue divided and re-grouped people in unexpected ways. One might expect a pacifist to be against conscription but there were also women who supported the war effort and yet who were against conscription. According to Mrs. Anna Smokorowsky in her interview for the oral history, *The Great War and Canadian Society*, "The people in Gilbert Plains, Manitoba were very patriotic but almost all were opposed to Conscription, both farmers and townspeople" (Read 1978:106).

Everywoman's World, which was very supportive of the war effort throughout the four years of its duration, ran its own election on the issue of conscription and found an overwhelming majority of woman were against it, although they were supportive of the war. The journal constructed the vote under the name of "The Women's Parliament of Canada." They printed an argument for each side and ballots that the readers were asked to fill out and send in.¹²⁰ The results showed that a majority of 6:1 voted against conscription.¹²¹ Unfortunately they did not say how many women voted in total. Those

¹¹⁸ This comment was made by Gloria Geller in her article "The Wartimes Elections Act of 1917 and the Canadian Women's Movement" (1976:97). Her proof of this was, that Westerners lived in remote areas with less chance for contact and thus they depended more on the popular papers to help inform their ideas.

¹¹⁹ While living in the United States Beynon furthered her message by writing an anti-war novel, *Aleta Dey* (1919), about a pacifist woman from Winnipeg. Aleta ends up being arrested and sent to jail for her efforts in campaigning against the war and soon after is killed while pursuing her pacifist cause.

¹²⁰ Unfortunately the issue of *Everywoman's World* which contained the debates and the ballots is not included in the National Library's special collection, only the issue with the results. I assume that the structure of the voting was the same as a vote which was held on the subject of prohibition included in the June 1917 issue. For this Woman's Parliament of Canada three ballots were printed along side the arguments of the debate and the readers were encouraged to send in their vote and those of two neighbours or another woman of the household 21 years of age and over.

¹²¹ Although Francis Beynon was diametrically opposed to the support *Everywoman's World* showed towards the war, she cited this article in her essay on conscription as an indication of public opinion against conscription (1976:253).

voting were from “every class and rank, and in every part of the country” (“Women’s Parliament of Canada Conscription” 1917:19). The article concludes that it was a truly representative vote. Although this was a vote for all women, in the section of the article which discusses “Who Voted” the descriptions begin with poignant tales of mothers: “The mother who had given her only son, and she who had one son killed and three fighting.” The article continues on to tell us that what they all had in common was a desire to support their country whatever the personal cost. In the case of both newspapers, *The Canadian Forward* and *Everywoman’s World*, the image of the mother is presented as a moral authority.

Everywoman’s World said they would carry the news of Canadian women’s opposition to conscription to “seven hundred and fifty thousand readers and, with the aid of the newspapers, we shall reach every man and woman in Canada.”¹²² They also proposed to forward a resolution to the Prime Minister so that the government should know “the will of the wives, the mothers, and sweethearts of the man in khaki with regard to Conscription” (“Women’s Parliament of Canada Conscription” 1917: 19).

¹²² These claims seem optimistic considering the subscription rate by 1917 was only 130,000. However in 1915 the magazine claimed to have 500,000 readers as opposed to subscribers, so it may be that the 750,000 figure includes subscribers, stand sales and the hope that other members of the household and neighbours would be reading that issue in particular.

vi. Forms of Compensation

1. “No woman, idiot, lunatic, or criminal shall vote”: Federal Election, 1917¹²³

The federal election of December 1917 was fought over the issue of conscription. Behind the scenes, Sir Robert Borden had been careful to ascertain how women would vote if given the opportunity. He did this by sending out a telegram to three representatives of large women's organizations. Mrs. Torrington of the National Council of Women (NCW), Mrs. L.A. Hamilton of the National Equal Franchise League and Win the War League, and Mrs. Albert Gooderham president of the Independent Order of the Daughters of the Empire (IODE) all received the telegram of 2 August 1917 which included the question “would the granting of the Federal franchise to women make conscription assured at the general election?” (in Geller 1976:101). In turn women across the country were canvassed for their opinions and the message was relayed back to Borden that the “granting of the franchise would imperil conscription” (Geller 1976:102). Two alternatives of partial enfranchisement were suggested at the time: the one which was eventually used, that the vote should be given to those female relatives of the enlisted men, and the other, that it should be confined to those who already had it through provincial law, namely, in Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan.¹²⁴

The government of Prime Minister Robert Borden passed the Wartime Elections Act 20 September 1917 to extend the franchise¹²⁵ to the female relations of those who had

¹²³ This quote was used by Nellie McClung in her book, *In Times Like These*, to introduce chapter four entitled, “Should Women Think.” (1917b:34). Although she stated that it was “from the Election Act of the Dominion of Canada” it is in fact a summation of the Ontario Election Act, 1914. Chap.8, s.2 (14) and (15) which upholds the federal Election Bill, Canada. House of Commons. Debates, April-June, 1869, Vol.2.

¹²⁴ The idea of a partial franchise had been previously raised in 1916 by Nellie McClung who had suggested to Borden that the vote be given to women born in Britain and Canada (Geller 1976:101).

¹²⁵ The Military Voters Act was adopted at the same time – both Acts requiring closure of debate in order to pass. The Military Voters Act gave the vote to nurses serving in the war and stated that military voters could

served or were serving in the Canadian or British military or naval forces. The Act increased the voter lists by approximately 500,000 names but it also disenfranchised some women who already had the vote by virtue of provincial legislation.¹²⁶ The Act was designed solely to support the Union Government, and many of those who might have voted against it by reason of their religious affiliations, ethnicity, or lack of family connection to the military, lost the vote.

The government did its best through selective enfranchisement to ensure that the law for conscription would pass but pressure was also applied by the churches to both women and men to vote for the Unionists. The ministers in three out of four Protestant churches across the country spoke out in support of Borden's government on the Sunday before the election (Canada. Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada 1997:60). The outspoken leader of the Methodist church, Reverend Chown presented a vote for the Unionists and their platform of conscription as a vote for true Christianity,

This is a redemptive war, and its success depends entirely upon the height of sacrifice to which our people can ascent. It is under this conviction that ministers of the gospel feel in duty bound to enter the political arena. We shall fail, and fail lamentably, as Christian people unless we catch the martyr spirit of true Christianity and do our sacrificial duty between now and the 17th of December.¹²⁷

assign their vote to any riding they had lived in or have the party for which they voted choose which riding to place the vote. What made this freedom to choose a riding most important was the fact that included in the Act was the provision that the overseas votes were to be counted 31 days after the election. At that time when the votes had been counted in Canada the government redistributed the military votes (90 percent for Borden) in such a manner as to win fourteen more seats (Canada. Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada 1997:58-68).

¹²⁶ The Act also excluded all conscientious objectors from voting as well as many who had only become British Subjects after 31 March 1902 and who had been born in what had by then become enemy territory (Canada. Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada 1997:59).

¹²⁷ These words were not only published in the *Christian Guardian*, 12 December 1917, but according to The Canadian Annual Review of Public Affairs, 1917 from which this quotation comes, "in the press throughout Canada" (Hopkins 1918:629).

Those who had the vote and were inclined to cast it for the Liberals had to withstand a barrage of English language media which blatantly supported the Unionists. As many of the new voters were women, much of the media attention was paid to them focusing on loyalty and honour. On December 15, 1917 the *Ottawa Evening Journal* ran a banner across the top of the front page reading: "If ye Break Faith with Us Who Die, We Shall Not Sleep Though Poppies Grow in Flander's Fields." Directly below the headline was a photograph of Winnipeg War Widows at a political meeting in support of the Union Government with the caption "This reveals the keen interest of the woman voter" ("If ye Break Faith with Us Who Die" 1917).

A *Saturday Night* magazine editorial which clearly supported conscription, emphasized the importance of men helping women to vote and not just "laugh at the ignorance of some women in the processes of voting" ("If Union Government is Beaten" 1917:2). As for women, honour was in their hands, "Canada is asking the women-relatives of the soldiers to help maintain her honour before the eyes of the world" ("If Union Government is Beaten" 1917:2).

The issue of honour was also presented as an argument against conscription in the *Everywoman's World* article on this topic in the letters from readers. Their main arguments were that it would make Canadian law worse than Prussian militarism. To force men to enlist would be a disgrace, it would not be fair and men should be able to go as others did, of their own free will.

2. Phones or Funds: The Organization of Financial Recompense

Many women did get the vote in the 1917 election, although of course it was only those who could reasonably be expected to vote for conscription. The government was essentially compensating them in the form of a public voice, for their support of the war-effort and a willingness to, as Reverend Chown said, “catch the martyr spirit of true Christianity” and ascend to the “height of sacrifice” (Hopkins 1918:629).

The vote was not the only compensation these women received. The Canadian Patriotic Fund (CPF) was an organization set up by private citizens at the beginning of the war to help support the financial needs of the soldiers’ dependents.¹²⁸ Those who organized the Fund saw it as a compensation for the bravery of the male members of the family, insisting “that an allowance from the CPF was not charity, but payment of the country’s debt to its heroes overseas” (McCallum 1988:160).¹²⁹ A pamphlet explaining the Fund written by Herbert Brown Ames M.P., stated that “The men may be the heroes, but the women are likely to be the martyrs of this War, and their sacrifice should be valued accordingly” (Ames 1915:14). It may have been hoped that the female recipients of the Fund would behave in a pure and noble martyr-like fashion, but to ensure this was the case, the moral behaviour of the female recipients was kept under scrutiny. If her behavior was found to be wanting and, for example, if she had a sexual affair while her husband was overseas, she risked having her payments reduced and her children taken from her and

¹²⁸ Parents were entitled to a pension on the death of their son if there were no other eligible dependants and even after the war the CPF continued to support the parents (McCallum 1988:165).

¹²⁹ The Fund organizers made it clear that on an individual level, if a man did not fight he must pay. To clarify this point Ames drew a comparison with the American Civil War stating that at that time it was customary for men to buy other men to take their places on the fighting line. “I know a man who bought two other men to go the front for him and paid each man \$500.00 for the purpose” (Canada, House of Commons Debates 24 February 1915:402).

placed with a welfare society (McCallum 1988:161).¹³⁰ Another expectation of the recipient's behavior was that they would feel compelled out of a sense of gratitude to act as recruiters. A pamphlet entitled "A Message to the Canadian Soldier's Wife" published by the Fund made this clear, "While your husbands are at the front helping to beat Germany, you also can bring up strong reinforcements by helping to get more men and more money" (1916:7).

During the war, parliament began discussing Mothers' Pensions. *Everywoman's World* published an editorial entitled "Canada Must Have Mothers' Pensions: As a Record of Service Rendered and a Safeguard for the Nation of Tomorrow" ("Canada Must Have Mothers' Pensions" 1917:3).¹³¹ The question was asked, "Canada's manhood is being sorely depleted on the battlefronts. What is being done at home to insure the filling of that void in national citizenship?" Although the article does not explicitly call upon the government to compensate mothers financially for the service they have rendered to the country by producing the Canadian soldiers who are being killed, it comes close to it. Just as it comes close to saying that mothers need to be supported so they can produce more citizens who may also turn into soldiers like their older brothers.¹³²

¹³⁰ One young man, Frank Bell, who boarded with a mother who was receiving \$20.00/month from the CPF (and the same amount in separation pay from her husband) described how the CPF payment was perceived, "this was a gift; it was charity, it wasn't from the government. This was administered by a group of rich men's wives, and if they found that a wife was running around, or that she was living beyond her means (they thought), or something, they would cut her off. One of the ways she could live beyond her means was to put in a telephone" (Read 1978:189).

¹³¹ Dr. Helen MacMurchy (1862-1953), a great social activist in the area of public health care particularly for mothers and children, connected the battlefield with the importance of childcare when she stated "We are only now discovering that Empires and States are built up of babies. Cities are dependent for their continuance on babies. Armies are recruited only if and when we have cared for our babies" (in Arnup 1990:191).

¹³² A call for financial support for war-bereaved mothers in another form came from Rev. George Williams. He demanded that "every mother who lost her son is entitled to as least as much as the best of us has who stayed at home" (Williams 1919:1). His not-so-subtle use of guilt was intended to get people to invest in Victory Loans.

At a time when national security was at the forefront of most people's minds, a "Safeguard for the Nation" must have been understood in a military sense. The editor points out that an essential aspect of the scheme is that the mother receives the money herself in order "to conserve the home which is in danger because of the death of the breadwinner"(November 1917:3).¹³³ A parallel issue of the day was prohibition. It may be that one reason the editor felt it was essential for the mother to handle the money was so it did not turn into an alcoholic libation for any older male relation. But there is also a deeper issue involved here. If the money goes directly to the mother it creates a bond between these women and the state helping to ensure their mutual support. A state at war depends on young children being raised to think "*dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*."¹³⁴

The federal government resisted the lobby for a national mothers' allowance program but provincial legislation was gradually adopted in Manitoba (1916), Saskatchewan (1917), Alberta (1919), British Columbia (1920), and Ontario (1920) (Little 1998:18). Those who lobbied for the Ontario Mother's Allowance did so on the basis of a maternalistic ideology which "extolled the virtues of domesticity" (Little 1998:26).¹³⁵ In a

¹³³ The idea of public support for mothers did not arise in a vacuum. Pensions were an important issue at this time. Stephen Leacock wrote an editorial in *Everywoman's World* on the need for Soldier's Pensions (1918:3). His argument for the support of a variety of social pensions rested to a large extent on the change in the relationship between the government and the people in light of conscription. If the government could compel men to sacrifice themselves for the country then the people had the right to compel the government to support them. "The old creed of every man for himself has broken down. In place of it has come a new doctrine of social solidarity in which the welfare of each is the common cause of all" (1918:3).

¹³⁴ It is sweet and proper to die for one's country (Horace). This phrase was used in an ironic sense as a title in a poem by Wilfred Owen but many took the sentiments seriously during the war.

¹³⁵ Mother's Allowances were in part a way of compensating women who were being urged out of the workforce by the government in order to make room for the returning veterans. An Ontario government pamphlet directed at women workers stated, "Who has the job you have before you took it? Was it a soldier? Then to him you owe the opportunity you had to gain a new experience, and some extra money. To his bravery and self sacrifice you owe the fact that you were able to work in peace and security. Now he has come back. He must have work to support himself and those dependent upon him. What is your duty? There is only one answer to that question. Of course you will go back to your home in order that the man may have a job" (AO, RG 7-12-0-11, file: Employment, General, 1918-1919, 'To Women Workers').

manner similar to the moral guidance involved in the distribution of the Canadian Patriotic Fund, the National Council of Women promoted a policy for the OMA which would include investigations and moral regulation of the recipients (Little 1998:14). The moral authority previously exerted over the poor by private charities of the nineteenth century was now taken over by the government.

The financial recompense which women in general and mothers specifically received in the form of the Mothers' Allowance and the Patriotic Fund grew out of a need to support those who were bringing up the boys to fill the places of "Canada's manhood [which was] being sorely depleted on the battlefields" ("Canada Must Have Mothers' Pensions" 1917:3). Through these financial means and enfranchisement, women with a particular ideology and morality were being supported by the government and the well-to-do of Canadian society. In a similar manner, the Palestinian and Iranian mothers of martyrs received compensation during those times when their communities were involved in armed conflict or outright war. We hear now, during the second Intifada, of Iraq's generous support of the families of the Palestinian martyrs, but the idea of this financial support began many years ago. In 1965 the Palestinian National Movement set up a committee of three headed by Umm Jihad in Amman, to distribute allowances to the families of men killed in commando raids on Israel. This social welfare program became known as the Families of the Martyrs Foundation. In a move which broke with Arab tradition and mirrored what was called for in the Canadian situation, the committee decided to give the money directly to the women. Umm Jihad realized that once the men of the household had been killed the family's connection to the revolution would be weakened. In a place where men were the primary wage earners, this was a practical as well as philosophically and

politically astute move. By giving the money to the female head of the house the committee helped secure the family's financial, social, and educational welfare and increased the power of women in the culture. Most importantly in Umm Jihad's mind, the program helped to maintain the spiritual connection of the families with the revolution (Kawar 1996:41).

Another social welfare program, The Palestine Martyrs Works Society, known by its acronym of Samed, meaning steadfast, was developed for the vocational training of women. It was based on the same idea of empowering women. However, by its name it held the memory of those who died for the cause (Kawar 1996:41). Welfare programs designed to connect battlefield deaths with public financial support were also established by the Iranian government during the Iran/Iraq war. To help support the call for volunteers the government set up the Martyrs' Foundation (*Bonyad-e Shahidan*) which superseded the previous Foundation for the Oppressed (*Bonyad-e Mosta'zafin*). Both drew their membership from the same pool of committed believers (Chubin and Tripp 1988:133).¹³⁶ The support the foundation gave to the families of the martyrs during the war was considerable. As the journalist Anwar Nasir from the *Far Eastern Economic Review* stated, "Families of martyrs are virtually a privileged class" (1986: 37).

3. The Memorial Cross: Symbolic Recompense

The families of the Canadian soldiers killed in the World War One were by no means a privileged class. But there was another form of official recognition for which people began to lobby during the war – a recognition for the mothers who had lost their

sons. The medal which was eventually designed to commemorate the mothers was called the Memorial Cross when it was first struck on December 1, 1919 by an act of the Privy Council. The official recognition that the medal offered was an innovation at the time in the British Empire (Jocelyn 1956:243). Officially, it is given to both wives and mothers of men killed in action but it has been the mothers who have captured the public's attention much more so than the wives.¹³⁷ This has been true since the medal was struck and even when it was still in the planning stage. The Canadian fiction author, William Alexander Fraser (1859-1933), suggested to Prime Minister Robert Borden that a medal in the form of a silver cross be created to commemorate the sacrifice of bereaved mothers. An early reference to the medal was a small news piece entitled "Silver Crosses For Bereaved Mothers",

The Canadian Mother who has given a life to the cause of right on the battle fields of France – a life more precious than her own – the life of her son, over whose grave she cannot place a cross, will wear a little silver cross over her heart that we may know she cherishes memory that is priceless, of one who faltered not at the call of his duty... Canada will thus pay a simple tribute to a courageous motherhood that has laid its sacrifices on the altar of freedom, bearing its loss with splendid fortitude and unfailing courage ("Silver Crosses For Bereaved Mothers" 1916:3).

Not only does this short article tell us it is the mother's loss which looms large and poignant in the public mind, we also learn that it was wrenching for the mothers not to be

¹³⁶ The prototype for this foundation was the Palestinian Families of the Martyrs Foundation (Kawar 1991: 41).

¹³⁷ This is still true today as is clear from an article printed in a local newspaper of Okotoks, Alberta, *The Western Wheel*, about a Silver Cross representative (Beckett 1999) who was chosen to lay the wreath at the Remembrance Day ceremonies in her town. In introducing her and explaining why it was a wife rather than a mother who was chosen, the reporter, Gillian Beckett, said, "Traditionally the role of Silver Cross Mother has been reserved for a mother whose son(s) had served in the two world wars." She reasons that because the mothers are dying off, "to carry the legacy of an honoured tradition, the role has been extended to the wives of such soldiers." It is easy to see how this understanding of the role came to be. Beckett is merely giving voice to a message which has been prominent since before the medal was even struck – a mother's loss was considered the most heartbreaking and thus the one to call in the most respect.

able to have their sons' graves nearby. According to the policies of the Imperial War Graves Commission, details of which will be the subject matter of Chapter Five, no soldiers' remains were to be repatriated to Canada. Although religion is not mentioned specifically, the symbolism is evident. The silver cross she wears over her heart is compared with the Christian symbol of the cross over the grave. But thereafter the Christianity becomes indistinct and blends with a ritual of sacrifice which could belong to any number of traditions in which the mother offers her son's life in exchange for a value upon which the life of her threatened community depends, in this case, freedom.

In September 1917, the Canadian poet and essayist, Jean Blewett, wrote in her editorial column in *Everywoman's World* of a "Mothers' Recognition Committee." The group was centred in London, Ontario and extended its membership all over the "Dominion."

The work of the Recognition Committee will be to see to it that the mothers who are giving their sons to fight and win, or fight and fall in this War receive tokens commemorating their sacrifice, and the heroism of their sons; tokens which stand for a public acknowledgment of the power their motherhood is in all that concerns the nation (Blewett 1917:53).

Once again we see that the power of motherhood is taken to extend over the whole community or nation. It is not only their power as mothers which the Recognition Committee is asking to be memorialized but that tied to this power is the heroism of their sons. Like the honour of the sons reflecting on the mothers that was discussed above, the heroism of the sons in turn gives the mothers a heroic quality.

In the same publication heroic mothers are mentioned by name in the article "They Know The Meaning of Sacrifice: Nine Canadian Mothers Who Have Sent Forty-Seven Sons to Fight" ("They Know" 1917:5) (See Plate 11). Below the photographic portraits of

each woman is a short biography on how many sons each mother had in uniform, how many had been invalided, and how many had been killed. The numbers in the title are meant to tell the real story. These women are giving all of what is most precious to them. A similar image was published after the war as a record of the sacrifice of another group of mothers. On Warriors' Day, August 28, 1920, a group of women travelled in an open car as part of a veterans' parade with a huge banner on the side of the car reading "These Four Mothers Gave To Their Country 28 Brave Sons" (Pringle and Booth NAC PA60562).

Mrs. Charlotte Susan Wood of Winnipeg is the Silver Cross mother whose photograph hangs in the Canadian War Museum (See Plate 10). She is a daunting example of the sacrifice mothers made during the war. She was introduced as Canada's First Silver Cross Mother to King Edward VIII at the Vimy Ridge Pilgrimage in 1936 (Murray 1936:107). Two other mothers shook hands with the King, Mrs. T.H. Wardle and Mrs. N. MacDonald, but Mrs. Wood was the one chosen to lay a wreath on England's tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey as part of the Vimy Pilgrimage ceremonies. She was the mother of twelve sons, eleven of whom fought in the war and five of whom were killed in action.¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Another mother whose loss of five sons in war has been commemorated through the years is Mrs. Bixby of Boston, Massachusetts. The movie, *Saving Private Ryan*, provided recent popular reference to her. Mrs. Bixby's loss is remembered because of the letter of respect she received from Abraham Lincoln on November 21, 1864 during the American Civil War. Lincoln's letter is interesting in its reflection of the sentiments of pride and honour found in Pericles' funeral oration of 403 BCE which will be discussed in Chapter Five. He addressed Mrs. Bixby: Dear Madam: I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant-General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless must be any words of mine which should attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement, and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost, and the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom. Yours very sincerely and respectfully, Abraham Lincoln (Lincoln 2002).

If circumstance has chosen an image of the Silver Cross mother, it is one particular photograph of Mrs. Wood which has become known. The photo was taken while she was on the pilgrimage. She is standing in a farmer's field (NAC PA-148875) her viewer while wearing her blue pilgrim's beret and all her sons' medals on her coat (See Plate 10). This is the photograph of her which hangs in the museum. It is the most prominent one of her in the book *The Epic of Vimy* (Murray 1936) and, as testament to its lasting power, it is the picture David Pierce Beatty chose for the cover of his book, *The Vimy Pilgrimage* (Beatty 1987). Rather sadly, for the sake of Mrs. Wood's memory, in all of these cases, including the National Archive's photographic records, her name has been mistaken. The small error of adding an "s" to the end of her name has ensured that her story has remained buried since her death.¹³⁹

Like many Canadians at that time, Mrs. Wood was born in England. She was working as a laundress when she married the widower Frederick Louis Wood, who had six sons. Charlotte and Frederick had one daughter and six sons. In 1905 the couple with just four of the youngest boys emigrated to Canada. When war was declared four of Charlotte's older stepsons, who were in England, immediately enlisted. The eldest boy, Richard, had already died in South Africa during the Boer War. By 1916, eleven sons had enlisted, the youngest two, Charles and Percy, being only 17 and 15 years old. Percy was killed at Vimy before he was 18 years old.

¹³⁹ Fortunately, Ceris Schrader spent a year uncovering Mrs. Wood's history after finding a photograph of her among her uncle's Canadian Expeditionary Force (CEF) souvenirs inscribed only, "Lady Lost Five Sons." In a war where the remembrance and commemoration of names was so important it is even more than as Schrader says, "a shame that someone could lose five sons in the service of their country and, just eighty years later, have almost no-one remember even her name" (Schrader 2002).

Mrs. Wood's obituary, entitled "World War Mother Succumbs As Big Guns Roar Once More," states that her "family sacrifices during the Great War made her known throughout the British Empire" ("World War Mother" 1939:2).¹⁴⁰

Of course there were and are many others who wore the Silver Cross. Following World War One, 58,500 Silver Crosses were awarded. During World War Two, 32,500 were given out, and since Queen Elizabeth II ascended the throne, 500 have been awarded. The Cross has the cipher of the reigning monarch on the front and the name and service number of the son or husband on the other side. It hangs from a purple ribbon, has a crown at the top, maple leaves on the other three bars, and the whole rests within a wreath of laurel. Laurel has long been used as a symbol of victory. In ancient Greece, warriors and athletes were crowned with it to signify their glory. Subsequently it entered into the world of martyrs in both Judaism and Christianity as a symbolic crown of piety.

Although Silver Cross mothers and wives have been laying wreaths on memorials across the country in memory of their sons and husbands since the end of World War One, it was not until the Second World War that one began to see Silver Cross mothers presented in positions of honour.¹⁴¹ *The Globe and Mail* from November 12, 1942, for example, mentions the position of prominence given to almost 100 Silver Cross mothers at the Remembrance Day ceremonies in Toronto ("Busy Tempo" 1942:4).¹⁴² These women sat

¹⁴⁰ The obituary also mentioned that she was "keenly interested in the welfare of returned men." She was active in a number of organizations, many related to the war, "honourary president of the ladies auxiliary, Imperial Veterans, B.E.S.L.(the British Empire Service League, a precursor to the Royal Canadian Legion), mother of the Guards' association of Canada, and a life member of the Comrades of the World" ("World War Mother" 1939:2).

¹⁴¹ There are newspaper references before 1942 which mention mourning women at Armistice Day celebrations but do not refer to the Silver Cross. *Toronto Daily Star* mentions hundreds of Toronto mothers "giving vent in common to pent up grieving for war stricken sons" ("Mother Bears her Burden" 1927).

¹⁴² Jonathan Vance mentions an earlier example of the priority shown to bereaved mothers at the unveiling ceremony of the Yarmouth Town and County War Memorial, Thursday, November 11, 1926. These women

just before the speaker's podium during the ceremony. It was at this time that the Royal Canadian Legion began choosing one Silver Cross recipient to represent all Silver Cross women from the country in the laying of a wreath at the cenotaph.

After World War Two the Silver Cross Women of Canada founded their own association. The name of it, Remembrance Association, hearkened back to the official name of the Memorial Cross. The mandate of the association was,

To forward the welfare of widows and mothers of former personnel of the Royal Canadian Navy, Royal Canadian Army, Royal Canadian Air Force and Fire Fighting Services who were killed in action or who died in consequence of service, and the welfare of such former personnel who are hospitalized or otherwise in need of assistance (CWM 19800700-005 58C 1 31.3).

This charter of the national association was dated 29 October 1948. Different regions across the country set up their own chapters of the Remembrance Association through which they raised money and planned their own local welfare programs. One member of the Ottawa local, Mrs. Clara Twidale, gave a speech about the Silver Cross at the June 26th, 1956 meeting of the chapter. It must have been well received as there are a number of copies kept in the chapter's scrapbook (CWM 19790335-001 58E 6). She places the medal within a long history of rewards offered to those who have provided a service for their community. Beginning with a mention, by the first century CE historian Josephus, of a golden button used to commemorate military service and carrying on through British history up to the striking of the Victoria Cross, she ended with the Silver Cross of World

were given special consideration in the seating arrangements for the ceremony (2000:149). Another example from recent times of the respect shown to the Silver Cross mothers came in the form of a Nova Scotia parliamentary resolution calling for the congratulations of Mrs. Margaret Langille for her participation in the 1996 Remembrance Day Ceremony as the Silver Cross Mother: "Whereas Mrs. Langille has served her town, her province, her country and all mothers who lost their sons in battle proud as this year's Silver Cross Mother" (Nova Scotia 1996). This form of official recognition of mothers of the fallen has also been given to

War One. Twidale did not then go on to a discussion of bereavement that is the deciding factor for the awarding of the Silver Cross, but brought up at length all the war work women had done during the First World War.¹⁴³ Not only did she recognize that women had assumed “front page news” at the time for their work but also because they were involved in many tasks which they had never done before from working the power machinery in plants, to driving ambulances and nursing in the actual war theatres.

It was only after a fairly lengthy list of women’s war-time occupations that Mrs. Twidale came to the subject of birth and bereavement. She stated that God gave women a very important place in the universe – as is indicated by their bodies which nurture and love all human beings before they are even born. She spoke of placing children “in God Almighty’s care by our prayers throughout their formative years and when the need arose have we not returned them not without aching hearts, to God and Country?” Her words are reminiscent of Mrs. Warwick’s descriptions of raising her son to know of God and connecting that teaching with military service.

By speaking at length about all the work and service women did plus the loss of a son, it is as if Mrs. Twidale is forming a complete package for which these women should be awarded recognition. It may be that she saw the Silver Cross as a coming of age emblem for women. But she was speaking in 1956. It is notable that although there were 26,000 more Silver Crosses given out after World War One than after World War Two, it was not until after the Second World War that the association was formed with its mandate to

Palestinian mothers of martyrs. They cut ribbons at opening ceremonies, sit beside dignitaries and are thanked by leaders for their sacrifices

¹⁴³ A thorough discussion of the work in which women were involved during the war was included in the women’s section of *Saturday Night’s* Dominion Day celebratory issue of 1916. It was so full that the

develop social welfare programs for those women who suffered directly from the war and in remembrance of the fathers, sons and husbands they lost.

The association may not have formed until then because women were strongly encouraged to return to their homes from the workplace after World War One and, as they were no longer gathering for war-time charity work, there were fewer opportunities for women to meet in order to organize a Remembrance Association. The development of an association after World War Two may be in part a reflection of a more utilitarian attitude towards the commemoration of the Second World War. There were few monuments and more social programs devised to commemorate the Second World War. Twidale mentions "the institutions of learning and research whereby mankind may benefit by continued education and development" which were used to "perpetuate the memory of valorous deeds" (CWM 19790335-001 58E 6).

The Association made a variety of efforts to promote their organization, the memory of their sacrifice, and their social programs. At a national meeting in 1949 they "resolved to bring pressure to bear on pensions for mothers" (CWM 1947 - 77. 19810790 58E 3). At the same time, mention was made in the minutes of the Silver Cross Remembrance Association national meeting that some members would be discussing the making of a stamp to commemorate the Silver Cross mothers with government officials.¹⁴⁴ The American equivalent of the Remembrance Association, the Gold Star Mothers Association, was

magazine made the decision to have a special issue come out the next week, July 8, which was devoted solely to the work of Canadian nurses ("Dominion Day" 1916).

¹⁴⁴ The Iranian government also made use of a stamp to publicly commemorate the women who supported the state in wartime. In 1986 they issued a postage stamp in remembrance of "Woman's Day" celebrated on the anniversary of the birth of Fatima, the mother of the martyr, Husayn. The stamp shows a woman holding a child with a headband marking him as a future martyr (Eickelman 1989:197).

always ahead of the Canadians in organization and promotion.¹⁴⁵ The American Gold Star recipients developed their association soon after World War One and, by the 1920s, had begun lobbying the government for a sponsored pilgrimage to Europe. In 1948, the Gold Star mothers had a stamp issued in their honour (September 21, 1948). The powerful American national identity is embedded in the symbol chosen to commemorate these mothers. They are the golden stars in a country which presents itself as a unity of stars.¹⁴⁶ In contrast, the main symbol of the Silver Cross medal points to a religion shared with others well beyond Canadian national borders.

The criteria for the awarding of the Silver Cross has been changed officially to include women who had been bereaved through other conflicts including those of peacekeeping missions. Chapter Five will examine the notion of the Silver Cross mother supporting the death of a peacekeeping child and how it differs from the role of the original Silver Cross mother. Since 1999, the national representatives for the Silver Cross mothers have been mothers of peacekeepers until 2002.

Carol Isfeld, the national Silver Cross mother representative in 2000 has made the most of her profile. While her son Mark Isfeld was working in mine clearance in Croatia, his mother sent him small scrap-wool dolls to give out to the children. He was, according to the Department of Veterans' Affairs, a mine clearing expert who loved and was loved by

¹⁴⁵ Like the Silver Cross, the Gold Star was given to mothers and wives of service men who had died while serving in World War One and in both cases it was the mothers who held the primary position in the public mind. In the Gold Star Association's appeal for funding the women emphasized the strength of the bond between mother and son. In her article for the American National Archives, Constance Potter goes so far as to say that "The bond between wife and husband seemed almost secondary in the congressional debates. The bond between fathers and sons was barely considered – the association maintained that the maternal bond surpassed that of the paternal bond" (1999:4).

¹⁴⁶ The American Gold Star Mothers Association is still a thriving group, that meets annually and promotes patriotism and, since 1936, they have been celebrated by the nation each year on the last Sunday of September by presidential proclamation ("The American Gold Star Mothers" 2001).

children -- these are qualities of a heroic peacekeeper.¹⁴⁷ Not only did Mark provide a role model for the peacekeepers to uphold but his actions reflected well on his mother. She in turn maintains his memory by still making the dolls to be given out by peacekeepers in Mark's name. Like the mothers and sons of World War One this Silver Cross mother and her son were bound by honour and heroism. She has lived up to her role, proudly supporting the actions of her son and, consequently, those of the Canadian government.

Carol Isfeld did not have a Remembrance Association to help her. The local chapters of the Association across the country began closing as their members grew too old to participate in their programs. In 1974 the president of the National Association, Alta R. Wilkenson, wrote, "It will not be long now before our beloved Association will pass into history . Let us leave behind our records and 'footsteps on the sands of time.' We must never let the memories of this glorious time in the history of Canada be lost" (CWM 19790335 001 ARCH). The National Association and the Ottawa Chapter deposited their scrapbooks, charters, and the minutes of the National Conventions in the Canadian War Museum Archives in the hope of preserving something of the honour and glory that they believed to be a part of their beloved soldiers and their Association.

vii. Seed for the Planting Must Not Be Ground: Käthe Kollwitz and the Art of an Alternative Perspective¹⁴⁸

Stories of glory and honour, although the most common to be published and printed, were not the only stories told by bereaved mothers. Käthe Kollwitz, a German artist who

¹⁴⁷ ("Silver Cross Mother" 2001).

lost a son in the war, produced a body of work which clearly denied the value of war.¹⁴⁹ She does this not through images of devastation on the battlefield, but as Prelinger¹⁵⁰ says,

Kollwitz' work is unique because it includes no scenes of combat or of material devastation. Rather, it presents the phenomenon of war entirely from the perspective of the home front, of mothers and children in particular, and may in a sense be interpreted as a study of the notion of sacrifice (Prelinger 1992:56).

Kollwitz was subject to messages similar to those spread in Canada about the joy of sacrifice. Her diary entry of August 27, 1914 tells us of an article she read in the *Tag* by Gabriele Reuter about the role of women in the war. Referring to the author, Kollwitz wrote, "She spoke of the joy of sacrificing – a phrase that struck me hard. Where do all the women who have watched so carefully over the lives of their beloved ones get the heroism to send them to face the cannon?" Kollwitz's work can be seen as a reaction against the joy of sacrificing. She expressed her despair about the war in the Fall of 1916 (October 11) following the image of the ancient rite of human sacrifice brought up by the Christian minister:

When the minister blessed the volunteers, he spoke of the Roman youth who leaped into the abyss and so closed it. That was one boy. Each of these boys felt that he must act like that one. But what came of it was something very different. The abyss has not closed. It has swallowed up millions, and it still gapes wide. And Europe, all Europe, is still like Rome, sacrificing its finest and most precious treasure – but the sacrifice has no effect (Kollwitz 1916:74).¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ This quote, "seed for the planting must not be ground," is from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels* (1874) and was used by Kollwitz as a title for one of her works (Prelinger 1992:112).

¹⁴⁹ Carleton University Art Gallery in Ottawa hosted a show (May 13 – July 15, 2002) "Critical Graphics of the Weimar Period." Included in the exhibit are three prints by Käthe Kollwitz (1867- 1945). Two prints are from her War series, *Widow II* and *The Mothers*, and the third is called *Bread*.

¹⁵⁰ Elizabeth Prelinger is the author of the book *Käthe Kollwitz* which accompanied the 1992 exhibition of the artist's works at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, May 3- August 16, 1992.

Her desire to put an end to this kind of sacrifice was put into images in reaction to both world wars. The drawing, *Seed for the Planting Must Not Be Ground*, done in 1942, shows an old defiant woman with her arms around young children. The composition of this drawing is similar to that of *The Mothers* (1921) and the sculpture of *The Tower of Mothers* (1937-38), both showing a group of mothers protecting children by encircling them with their bodies. As the years progress the defiance on the mothers' faces increases. Eventually Kollwitz paid for her defiance against the state. In 1933 Kollwitz lost her teaching position and membership at the Prussian Academy of Arts because of her lack of support for the Nazi regime. Although she was too well known and appreciated to be personally banished, soon after this time her works were "banished from public view" (Klein and Klein 1976:118).

One of the pieces for which she is best known is the granite sculpture of *The Mourning Parents* (1932) which rests in the German cemetery of Vladslo, Belgium, where her son Peter (1896-1914) was buried. This work shows anguish not defiance. The statues of *The Mourning Parents* (See Plate 12) stand beside each other, both kneeling on blocks of granite. The father clutches his arms around himself while the cloaked mother bows her head. Jay Winter, in his book, *Sites of Memory Sites of Mourning*, remarks that Kollwitz' "memorial has a timelessness derived from her gift for taking an older religious frame of reference and remolding it to suit a modern catastrophe" (1995:113). The older frame of reference is Christianity and the image she has remolded is the pietà. She had reworked this image many times before. Her first drawing of *Pietà* was done in 1903 and provided her

¹⁵¹ Her final lines are reminiscent of Wilfred Owen's poem of the story of Abraham and Isaac, "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young," in which Owen accuses all the old European men of sacrificing the youth -- "all the seed of Europe -- one by one" (Owen 1971:42).

with a theme which she made use of throughout her career (Prelinger 1992:39).¹⁵² The mother figure in her series of drawings is naked above the waist and shows muscular arms tightly gripping her dead child.¹⁵³ This is no gentle, acquiescent Madonna figure, rather Kollwitz made her pietà “into a universalized statement about motherhood, abolishing the grace and ethereal tenderness associated with the work of Michelangelo or other southern representations” (Prelinger 1992:40).

The monument of *The Mourning Parents* contains within itself a reference to the ancient story of the *Pietà* and the passionate nature of the mother with her agony a little softened by time. Kollwitz draws out the element of despair from the old stories, not the glory of sacrifice.

viii. Conclusion: The Honour of Mother-Love on its Head

It is difficult to imagine that any mother would not despair the fate of her son dying on the battlefield, let alone merely “lament” as General Arthur Currie claimed when he spoke to the troops at Vimy. But as this chapter has shown there were mothers who supported the sacrifice of their sons in battle and did so with a brave face. These mothers were portrayed in newspapers, fictional tales, and propaganda posters. Their images turn the stereotypes of the nature of mother-love on its head, both in the animal kingdom, in the case of the depiction of the mother lion and her protective cubs, and among people. There were those who openly rejected militant motherhood during and after the war but the concept was a powerful one with historic roots.

¹⁵² In some of her pictures the mother and child were integrated into a social history, for example a rebellion in *A Weaver's Rebellion* or the story told in *Poverty*. In other cases she made it stand alone (Prelinger 1992:39).

¹⁵³ The model for the dead boy was her son Peter, killed eleven years later in the first months of the war.

The bond between mother and son was heavily laden with notions of honour. The recruitment advertisements promised honour to the men who enlisted and the mothers who supported them. Baroness Orczy formalized this production of honour with her Roll of Honour. The “Little Mother” tied honour and tradition together in the hands of mother and son to support the civilized world. Mrs. Warwick was most blatant in claiming honour from her son’s enlistment. The anti-conscription debates in *Everywoman’s World* gave evidence that the honour of risking death in war was contingent upon the ability to freely choose that course of action. If these decisions are forced they lose power. This was so for the mother of the ancient sacrificial victim described in Chapter One of whom Plutarch wrote. If she cried, the value of her child’s sacrificial death was completely negated. Her offer must appear to come from her heart. Similar to the mothers of this time, who were paid for their child to be sacrificed, the Canadian mothers of World War One soldiers could expect to receive some financial support, a public and political voice and, if bereaved, a Memorial Cross.

The art work involved in the recruitment posters or the stories of Mrs. Hughes, Mrs. Warwick or the “Little Mother” may now seem quaint and particular to their time in comparison with Kollwitz’ work. A voice speaking out against war and its sacrifices, her art is universal and timeless in its intensity and power. Although we may not find the artistic impact of Kollwitz’ art in the recruiting posters and the stories of the Little Mother, a short distance away from the cemetery where *The Mourning Parents* kneel stands a monumental mourning mother who powerfully brings to the fore the values of the Silver Cross mothers as opposed to those expressed by Kollwitz. This “Mother Canada” stands at

the front of the Canadian monument to the dead and the missing at Vimy Ridge – a subject for the next chapter.

Chapter Four: Monuments and Memories

i. Introduction: The Art and Rituals of Commemoration

After the war, comes the sad work of commemoration. This chapter will look at how the image of the mourning mother is used to memorialize Canada's participation in the Great War through the examination of the rituals of Remembrance Day, the memorial artwork of the Peace Tower, the Vimy Ridge memorial, and the Vimy Pilgrimage. The brave mourning of a child who has been sacrificed for a universal purpose such as the "war to end all wars" is a well respected act with deep historical roots in many religious traditions. It is for this reason that the symbol of the Silver Cross mother holds a sense of poignancy for a wide variety of people and is repeated from the Vimy Ridge memoiral to the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower and in each enactment of the Remembrance Day ritual.

In his writings on Jewish memory Yerushalmi (1982) has commented on the importance of including an historical event in the ritual and liturgy of a tradition if it is to be remembered. Historical details fade very quickly but the elements of a tale which have been woven into ritual will last in the memory of a community. Remembrance Day and its evolution from Armistice Day provides an interesting backdrop to the story of the development of the role of Silver Cross mothers after the war. Applying Yerushalmi's ideas on ritual and the remembrance of history, it becomes clear that it is because the Silver Cross Mother has a part to play in the ritual ceremony that the memory of her carries on. Long after the chapters of Silver Cross mothers across the country have closed down and the cessation of their charitable works, individual Memorial Cross recipients will still be

written about in papers across the country, interviewed on television, and honoured in provincial and federal parliaments. Her story is important enough that the role has been adapted to modern times with the awarding of the medal to mothers of peace-keepers killed while on duty.

A memory of the role of mothers who lost their sons in the war is also painted on the stained glass windows of the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower. This image of Canadian motherhood will be compared with the symbolic figure of “Mother Canada” standing at the front of the Vimy Memorial. These images of proud but mourning mothers are particularly well suited to form part of the structure of the commemoration of the Great War. As was seen in Chapter One, the stories of mothers stoically sacrificing their children to a higher cause are found in a variety of religious traditions and cultures. The soldiers who fought in World War One came from many of these cultures.

“Mother Canada” is part of the largest Canadian memorial calling Canadians to remember all those who had died in the “war to end all wars.” In 1936, in the unsettled pre-World War Two climate of Europe, her statue at the front of the Vimy memorial was unveiled in front of thousands of Canadians who had come to France for this ceremony and to see again, or for the first time, the battlefields where their friends and relatives had died. This organized trip to Vimy Ridge was described in religious terminology – it was the Vimy Pilgrimage. This was one more way in which the veterans and the bereaved remembered the war. This chapter will conclude with a look at the memorials and cenotaphs built across this country and how they can be seen to reflect more than only a Christian interpretation of the war.

ii. Annual Ritual: The Development of Remembrance Day

On Armistice day, 1918, the world went mad for joy and business was suspended for a day; today, Armistice day, 1919, and the first anniversary of the cessation of hostilities, the world is too busy solving the problems of peace to take time for celebrations, and business will be suspended for two minutes ("One Year of Peace" 1919:1).

What we think of now as a moment of *silence*, was originally an observation of a two minute cessation from work. It was suggested by South African leader Sir Percy Fitzpatrick and subsequently made into a formal request by King George V to all parts of the British Empire. The request was read in the Canadian House of Commons on November 6, 1919:

I believe that my people in every part of the Empire fervently wish to perpetuate the memory of that great deliverance and of those who laid down their lives to achieve it. To afford an opportunity for the universal expression of this feeling it is my desire and hope that at the hour when the armistice came into force, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month, there may be for the brief space of two minutes a complete suspension of all our normal activities. During that time, except in the rare cases where this might be impractical, all work, all sound and all locomotion should cease, so that in perfect stillness the thoughts of every one may be concentrated on reverent remembrance of the glorious dead (Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, 6 November 1919:1835).

The idea of a pause for commemoration was relatively new at the time. It had been used to great effect in Cape Town during the four years of the war, where all work stopped for three minutes at noon everyday so people could think of those who were fighting and those who had died in the war,¹⁵⁴ The quiet minutes were so well respected in London that

¹⁵⁴ Owen Chadwick cites this example and two early twentieth century American examples of the commemorative pause in his article "Armistice Day" (1976:323).

one observer was reminded “of the petrified city of Pompeii” (Chadwick 1976:325).¹⁵⁵

Canadians also respected the pause. The editorial in the *Winnipeg Tribune* commented that this form of commemoration fit the mood of the time far more so than the manner in which the first Armistice Day was celebrated. Peace was proving to be hard work for many; not only for the returning soldiers (“One Year of Peace” 1919).

In 1921 Armistice Day was established as a legal holiday under the Armistice Day Act. This legislation also stated that Thanksgiving would be observed on the same day, the Monday of the week during which November 11 occurred. The Liberal MP from South Renfrew had introduced the idea of a fixed holiday two years prior noting the support from business groups for this idea (Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, 23 May 1921, 3773-74).¹⁵⁶

A decade after the Act was passed it was amended so that Armistice Day would be celebrated on November 11 and would no longer be associated with Thanksgiving. This time the independent MP, A. W. Neill, from British Columbia, who introduced the bill, acted in response to pressure from veterans, rather than business groups (Canada. House of Commons, *Debates*, 18 March:1931). The change of name from Armistice Day to Remembrance Day came at this time as well.

If Remembrance Day had not been separated from Thanksgiving and, more importantly, legally celebrated on the 11th of November, it is likely it would not have

¹⁵⁵ The extent to which some people went to observe the day is exemplified in the story of an airplane flying between Manchester and London in 1922. The pilot turned the engines off and the four passengers stood at attention while the plane glided (Homberger 1996:1430).

¹⁵⁶ The federal and provincial Commercial Travelers' Association of Canada, the Ontario Association Boards of Trade and the Retail Merchants Association of Canada all supported the proposal of a fixed holiday Monday. It would be more convenient for employers and, as Denise Thomson suggested, the holiday Monday would “satisfy the powerful commercial travellers' lobby which wanted a guaranteed long weekend in November” (1995:9).

survived as successfully as it has in Canada. Another change which helped to bind people together in their act of commemoration and thus promote the lasting nature of Remembrance Day was one of technology. In 1931, the innovation of cross-Atlantic radio broadcasting allowed the Armistice Day Memorial Service in Albert Hall, London, to be broadcast across Canada via the Marconi Company and the Canadian National Telegraphs ("Radio: A Department" 1931).¹⁵⁷

In her comprehensive article on "Commemoration of War in Canada," Denise Thomson clearly illustrates that even though there was a designated holiday, because it did not necessarily fall on the 11th, events commemorating Armistice Day were divided between the 11th, the holiday, and the Sunday prior to the holiday (1995:9). The Legion members identified the problem and developed a resolution to submit to Parliament requesting a change in date and name for the holiday. They stated that because the holiday was not on the 11th, "the observance of this anniversary loses much of its significance and its sacred character is thereby much impaired" ("General Resolutions: Remembrance Day," 1929:25). The sacredness of the holiday was emphasized through repetition of the word, for they hoped it would be a day "sacred to all ex-service men and women and which should be sacred to the people of Canada" ("General Resolutions: Remembrance Day," 1929:25)¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ *The Globe's* "Radio Editor" made it clear how exciting it was at the time for North American audiences to be able to participate in the same celebrations as those attended so far away by their Majesties the King and Queen. What was of even greater significance than the proximity of royalty was the fact that this great technology of sound would, for a moment, be silent in respect for something which was far greater than itself, "radio's thousands of monster broadcasting tubes will cease their white-hot oscillating, and radio's giant voice will fall silent in the loudspeakers all over Canada and the United States at the dramatic Eleventh Hour this morning. Radio, a child of Great Wartime, will thus for one moment pay tribute to the voices that were stilled in the Conflict which ended thirteen years ago" ("Radio: A Department" 1931).

¹⁵⁸ Thomson makes the point that the Legion "explicitly cast remembrance of the dead as a sacred obligation upon the living" (1995:9).

The new name suggested by the Legion emphasized the remembrance of the soldiers rather than “the Armistice, a political achievement in which rank-and-file soldiers were not directly involved” (Thomson 1995:11). The veterans have worked diligently through the years to keep Remembrance Day a living commemoration, but probably their most effective act was to pressure the government to have a holiday on the 11th. In this way the day does not accommodate itself to anyone else’s interests, in fact it disturbs the regular pattern of life. Ronald Coppin argued in the mid 1960s that the decreasing number of people who observed Remembrance Sunday in Britain was due to the fact that the day was no longer “an interruption of ordinary working life; instead it is an observance for the declining numbers who wish to make it” (1965:527).¹⁵⁹ Another effect of the change in Britain in moving the day to a Sunday, was to make the day more Christian and less national (Chadwick 1976:328). Remembrance of the war was done within the confines of the churches.

The decline in Britain’s observation of the day was also noted by Chadwick who stated, “There is little doubt that by the law of history the commemoration of Remembrance Sunday will slowly die in emotion until the day is celebrated only in corners of the world”(Chadwick 1976:328). His predictions have not yet come true in Britain, and certainly not so in Canada, not merely because it is a “corner” of the world. One reason for this may be something he later alluded to, but not with regard to Remembrance Sunday: this is the importance of ritual acts in keeping historic events, such as the crucifixion, in living memory. Although our national Remembrance Day services have changed through the years, we have developed rituals which are followed and expected. Yerushalmi’s writings

¹⁵⁹ Although Coppin’s article was written at a time when the appeal of the Peace Movement would have

on this subject with regard to Jewish memory are applicable to the maintenance of Remembrance Day. He believed that ritual and liturgy were more important vehicles for Jewish memory than historiography (Yerushalmi 1982:40). The events which were transcribed into ritual and liturgy were far more likely to be remembered. Even if the historical details were lost, at least the essential memory of an event would stand (Yerushalmi 1982:51).

The national Remembrance Day ceremony has been referred to as a religious service by the CBC television announcer, Don Newman, who has hosted the program for many years. It is for this reason that the announcers do not speak at all from the time the Governor General arrives until the laying of the wreaths. Music is a large part of the ceremony including national, military, and religious songs. The core of the service consists of the playing of the Last Post -- the end of the soldiers' day -- followed by the minute of silence. Then comes the bugler playing Reveille -- the soldiers' wake-up call. Two poems which have been a constant part of the program are "In Flanders Fields" and the middle verse of Lawrence Binyon's poem, "For the Fallen,"¹⁶⁰

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.

Prayers and a benediction are given by military chaplains and finally the wreaths are laid on the cenotaphs. In recent years the wreath laying has followed a standard order: first the Governor General, followed by the Silver Cross mother, then the Prime Minister for the

affected the number of people observing Remembrance Sunday, his point is still valid.

¹⁶⁰ This poem, seldom presented in its entirety, begins with a description of England as a proud mother mourning her dead children in much the same way as war-supportive Canadian mothers are presented in art

people of Canada, the Parliament of Canada, and the Veterans. Many dignitaries follow but what is significant here is that the Silver Cross mother is second in status only to the royal representative in this event.

In the years after World War One, the bereaved who commemorated Remembrance Day were often pictured as women. In this way the poignancy of the women's stories of sacrifice during the war was maintained. Mrs. Wood, the first Silver Cross mother, was remembered for her consistency in laying wreaths in memory of her five sons each "Decoration Day"¹⁶¹ and Armistice Day [which] meant to her far more than to almost anyone else in the dominion" ("Mrs. Wood Dead" 1939:2). Although bereaved mothers are mentioned as attending ceremonies on November 11th during the inter-war years, as mentioned in the previous chapter, they were usually referred to as Silver Cross Mothers only after World War Two had begun and a new generation of women were joining the ranks of bereaved.¹⁶²

Since 1939, the Legion has been responsible for selecting the annual Silver Cross mother to represent all Silver Cross recipients in Canada in laying a wreath on the National War Memorial in Ottawa.¹⁶³ The provincial branches of the Legion gather the names of the Silver Cross recipients each year, some of whom will be chosen to lay wreaths in their communities. It is from this list that the Legion chooses a national representative. In their decision they try to cover the different military services, all the provinces and the different

and literature, "With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children/ England mourns for her dead across the sea" (Binyon 1914).

¹⁶¹ Decoration Day was a precursor to Memorial Day in the United States when, after the Civil War, the relatives of the dead would decorate the graves with flowers.

¹⁶² Even in Mrs. Wood's obituary in the *Winnipeg Free Press* there is no mention of the medal.

¹⁶³ Personal communication with Gilles Bussieres and Brad White, the past and present Service Officers of The Royal Canadian Legion (8 January, 14 November, 2001).

wars, although now the last consideration is a mute point as certainly the Silver Cross mothers from World War One are all gone as well as most of those from World War Two.

In the 1960s, the CBC began to televise the Remembrance Day ceremonies and in the 1990s, they began to include an interview with the Silver Cross mother as part of the television programming. This inclusion is probably in response to the increase in audience viewers since the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War Two in 1995 and the eightieth anniversary of the end of World War One in 1998.¹⁶⁴ When a day of commemoration is significant enough to the public, other events of a similar nature will be added to the commemoration. The programming of 2000 and 2001 have included other religious remembrance services that took place during the year. In 2000 the CBC aired their filming from the previous May of the homecoming of the Unknown Soldier and, in 2001 they showed their footage of the dedication of the National Military Cemetery at the Beechwood Cemetery, Ottawa.

Yerushalmi refers to this act of joining together events for commemoration as “homologization” (1982:49). In the context of Canadian history, this process has been called “annexation” by D.M.R.Bentley in his article, “Monumentalites” about Canadian memorials. He refers to the memory of General Brock and other, lesser military heroes, who gained by having their names associated with his (Bentley 1993:6). At the time of the war of 1812, the General was famous for his death in the defence of Canada. His name was so “prominen[t] in the history, mythology, and landscape of Ontario” that it inspired poets to connect the names of others with that of Brock in order to augment the status of those with no monument (Bentley 1993:6).

Clearly the fit between Thanksgiving and Remembrance Day was not close enough to maintain their connection. But this was not true for World War One and the subsequent wars. Although there are important differences between World War One, World War Two, and the Korean War, there are enough similarities that Remembrance Day serves them all. The attitudes towards the commemoration of war after World War Two were characterized more by a sense of utilitarianism as compared to the idealism and dreams of peace which came after the First World War. Schools, for example, were supported instead of building new monuments, and the dates of the subsequent wars were added to the existing monuments (Cannadine 1981:233). The amalgamation of the wars in Remembrance Day serves the memory of the wars in different ways. The immense death toll of Canadians in World War One lends weight to the sacrifice experienced in subsequent wars and the more recent wars serve to reinvigorate the memory of World War One. They have brought their bereaved into communion with those from the past. Celebrating the memory of World War Two and the Korean War together with World War One also adds a sad irony to thoughts of the first war considering it was believed to be the “war to end all wars.”

iii. Art and Architecture

1. Memorial Chamber: Images of Maternal Sacrifice

In memory of the “war to end all wars” the Peace Tower, known originally as the Peace and Victory Tower, was built in Ottawa after the destruction of the Parliament

¹⁶⁴ Personal communication with David Knapp, co-ordinator of CBC Remembrance Day programming (14

Buildings through fire in 1916. On August 3, 1927, the Prince of Wales unveiled the Altar of Sacrifice, a gift from the British Government ("Books of Remembrance" 2001). A reporter of the day writing for *The Globe* described who he thought the gathered crowd was remembering: those who "set their course 'through dust of conflict and through battle flame' to build for Canada, as nothing else could build, her present-day status of full nationhood" (Oliver 1927:1,3). The belief that the war had won Canada her status as a nation on the world scene was clearly in place by this time. The sacrifice the country had made was presented in religious imagery as well as numerous references to motherhood in the design of the chamber.

The names of those who died in World War One were originally meant to have been inscribed on the walls of the Chamber but there was not enough room. At the suggestion of Colonel A. Fortescue Duguid, the Book of Remembrance was commissioned. His influence for this idea was a passage from the book of *Malachi* 3:16 in the Hebrew bible: "A Book of Remembrance was written/ For them that feared the Lord,/ And that thought upon his Name./ And they shall be mine,/ Saith the Lord of Hosts,/ In that day when I make up my jewels." The Book was not finished until 1942, well into the Second World War. A Book of Remembrance was also written for the Second World War and, when finished, was placed in the Memorial Chamber on Remembrance Day, 1957 ("Books of Remembrance" 2001). These books are accorded the status of a religious relic with accompanying rituals performed on them. Each day at 11:00 am the glass cases enclosing the books are opened by a guard in ceremonial dress and the pages are turned so that each page is exposed once in the course of a year. The guard bows to and salutes each book beginning with the book

November 2001).

from World War One which rests on the Altar of Sacrifice before proceeding counter-clockwise around the chamber to the other books.

The Chamber was designed by the architect John Pearson. In a letter to the Prime Minister, W.L. Mackenzie King, dated June 24th, 1927, he described the symbolism of the three windows of the Chamber, the East Window – “The Call to Arms,” the West Window – “The Dawn of Peace,” and the South Window -- “Assembly of Remembrance.” The South Window contains a number of Christian symbols and characters. The Archangel Michael appears calling the nation to battle, St. George and the Dragon show the priority of right over tyranny; a figure with hands outstretched in the form of the Crucifixion presents the idea of the suffering that both sides endured; and Joan of Arc carries with her the symbols of France and French-Canadians. But the character who receives the most detailed description is that of an Athena-type figure representing Canada. At her back stands “Canadian Motherhood.”

In the third light of the lower part of the window is an heroic figure, armoured and helmeted, symbol of Canada proudly contemplative yet sorrowful, holding in her hand the victor's laurel wreath, she is standing above looking down to the centre of the Chamber upon the sculptured marble altar with the incised frieze of “MY MARKS AND SCARS I CARRY WITH ME, TO BE A WITNESS FOR ME THAT I HAVE FOUGHT HIS BATTLES WHO WILL NOW BE MY REWARDER... SO HE PASSED OVER, AND ALL THE TRUMPETS SOUNDED FOR HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE.” This altar bears the “Book of Remembrance”, containing the names of her valiant dead. Behind the figure of Canada stands another, symbolic of Canadian Motherhood, holding the shield of faith (Pearson 1927).

The “symbol of Canada” is similar to Athena only in her apparel, not her mien, for instead of having the features of a strong bold heroine, she is sad and thoughtful as she looks down on the names of all those who died for her. Nevertheless, it is this female figure who stands for Canada and her ability, through her sons who have been sacrificed, to

defend herself and her values. And if “sons” are meant metaphorically to be the symbol of Canada, they are meant literally to the faithful mothers who provided the background support for Canada. During the war, the mothers were presented as faithful to the cause both at home and in the giving of their sons to fight.¹⁶⁵

A sculpted precursor to the symbol of Canada was done by Frances Loring, who in 1917 created a patriotic monument to stand in the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE), Toronto. This work, entitled *The Spirit of Canada*, showed a figure of Canada sending her sons to war and on her side stood an imperial lion and cubs. The statue was constructed of plaster and straw and thus did not survive the years (Boyanoski 1987:19). A CNE Association report at the time, clearly indicating the Association’s pleasure with the sculpture, stated that it “symbolized splendidly the Spartan like Canadian woman with her whole-hearted spirit of service and sacrifice.”¹⁶⁶

In recent Remembrance Day telecasts the Silver Cross mother is shown in the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower looking at the Books of Remembrance. Her visit there joins or “annexes” her, in the sense used above, with the mothers of those whose names are in the Books of Remembrance. When entering and leaving the Memorial Chamber, the Silver

¹⁶⁵ Another image of a mother and child is carved into the sixth panel on the walls of the Chamber. It is the figure of the Virgin and Child of the Basilica at Albert, France (The Memorial Chamber, Archives Pamphlet 1931). The statue of Mary high up on the church was famous during the war. She hung almost parallel to the ground. A story spread among the soldiers that if she fell, the war was over. The superstition became prominent for both Germans and Allies (Fussell 2000:131-5). In the statue’s now golden form she still stands as a landmark visible from quite a distance over the French countryside.

¹⁶⁶ This comment from the *Report and Financial Statement for 1917* was quoted in Boyanoski 1987:19. Boyanoski discusses another allegorical female monument done by Loring and her fellow sculptor Margaret Scobie in 1917. The figure, *Miss Canada*, which had been commissioned to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Canada, stood outside the Eaton’s store in Toronto. The patriotism of the sculpture is evident in the *Globe*’s description of it as “standing in an attitude of triumph... holding proudly up the ensign of Canada in her right hand while in the left, posed on the pedestal, is a shield of all the Canadian Provincial arms (20 June 1917 as quoted in Boyanoski 1987:21). Many of the motifs of this sculpture were repeated in Pearson’s figures of Canadian Motherhood and the symbol of Canada in the south window of the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower.

Cross mother, like the rest of us, walks under a stone archway from which hangs an oversized representation of the Silver or Memorial Cross. The image of motherhood is repeated at the top of the arch with the bas relief figures of a Mother with Two Children.¹⁶⁷ An infant is held in the mother's arm paralleling the look of Mary holding Jesus and her other arm encircles a young standing child. The modern Silver Cross mother brings the sacrifice of the mothers of history and mythology into view once again, and they add the depth of history and tradition to hers.

2. Canadian Motherhood: On the Vimy Memorial

Pearson's description of the "symbol of Canada," and "Canadian Motherhood" appear to be models for the "Spirit of Canada," or "Mother Canada" as she is also known, who stands at the front of the Vimy Ridge memorial in France (See Plate 12). The design for the Vimy memorial by Walter Allward was selected as the winner in a national competition whose conditions were set out by the Canadian Battlefield Commission in a document dated December 20, 1920. The Commission wanted to erect eight memorial monuments on sites in France and Belgium significant both in their relation to battlefields and in their visibility.¹⁶⁸ They hoped that on those sites "the visitor would readily recognize the characteristic Canadian monuments among the many to be erected."¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ These figures with the angel below them are the work of Frances Loring entitled "Recording Angel and War Widow" (1928).

¹⁶⁸ Sixty-one years after the unveiling, an Interpretive Centre was opened at the Vimy Memorial. The Veterans' Affairs website states that the goal of the display is to "wrap the visitor in the atmosphere of Vimy in 1917, drawing on ones' emotions and senses to enhance ones' understanding of the facts" ("Interpretive Centre" 2000). The importance of the interplay between reason and emotion framing the presentation of this memorial is taken into consideration even down to the level of the placement of the trees in the "theatre" of this historic battlefield. The Commemorative Integrity Statement written by Parks Canada for Veteran's Affairs acknowledges that the Vimy Memorial Park has been developed in such a way that it "enables

In August 1921 Pearson publicized his plan to include a Memorial Chamber within the Peace Tower (Hucker 1998:92). It may be that Pearson, knowing of the battlefield memorial competition, felt the need to have a monument on Canadian soil to balance the one that would be built in France (Hucker 1998:92). Although it is unlikely that he would have seen Allward's description of the "Spirit of Canada" submitted to the selection committee, it sounded remarkably similar to his own vision of the figure of Canada. Standing on the wall of the Vimy memorial was to be, in Allward's words, "an heroic figure of Canada brooding over the graves of her valiant dead."¹⁷⁰ Compared with Pearson's "symbol of Canada proudly contemplative yet sorrowful... looking down... upon the sculptured marble altar," it seems clear that both designers were united in the image of Canada that they wanted to project.

Like Pearson's "symbol of Canada," the Allward figure looks down over a stone carved like a sarcophagus on top of which lies a helmet, maple leaves, and poppies. Not only does she gaze over this cenotaph-like stone but she also overlooks the Douai Plain where so many thousands were killed and where many of their bodies still lie. Just as Pearson's "symbol of Canada" looks on the names of those who died, the "Spirit of Canada" presides over the monument that carries the 11,285 names of the Canadians whose bodies were never found.

dramatic vistas of the monument to approaching visitors, creating a sense of drama and contributing to the spirit of the place" (Canada. Parks Canada 1997:4.0-11).

¹⁶⁹ Walter Allward Artist File, Canadian War Museum Archives.

¹⁷⁰ Walter Allward Artist File, Vol.2 Canadian War Museum Archives. Much of this file in the archives is now full of newspaper clippings of reviews of Jane Urquart's novel *The Stone Carvers* (2001). This fictional account of World War One, its aftermath and the building of the Vimy monument has renewed interest in that period of Canadian history as well as in the monument. Not only are ritual and liturgy important for the memory of historical events, but the drama of fiction and art allow history to appeal to a wider audience, thus keeping it in the public memory.

Although the monument presented a modern design at the time, the figure of the “Spirit of Canada” makes use of some traditional motifs regarding her apparel. She has a slipped chiton over her right shoulder exposing most of one breast. Initially, this seems a strange attitude for a mother in mourning, but the drooping clothing is meant not to expose an erotic feature but rather a virtue or a strength. In her study of the female figure in monuments, Marina Warner argues that “the allegorical female body either wears armour or proclaims its virtues by abandoning protective coverings” (Warner 1985:277). Pearson’s “symbol of Canada” wears the armour, while the “Spirit of Canada” shows her power through her disregard of her clothing. Another point Warner makes regarding the symbolism of the exposed breast in Greek literature seems applicable here as well. The breast often indicated “the claim of a mother’s love upon a hero, the bond that still joins the private and the public worlds” (Warner 1985: 282). The breast of the private world is the source of nourishment for the future hero. The public representation of this ability is shown in the depiction of the virtue, Charity, whose bared breast shows her ability to nourish and care for others (Warner 1985:285). The presentation of noblewomen in the form of Charity was a particularly common phenomenon after the seventeenth century.

Beyond nourishment and support for the men who have died for her, the “Spirit of Canada” also conveys a sense of mourning that is marked on her body. In ancient Mediterranean funeral rites, which are still maintained in some places and cultures today, mourning women tore at their clothes baring their breast, pulling their hair and slapping their faces. Unlike these women, the “Spirit of Canada” is contemplative but like them she stands in the traditional female role as chief mourner. In her quiet contemplation she reflects many depictions of Mary. The “Spirit of Sacrifice” with outstretched arms between

the pylons behind her, highlights this aspect of her character.¹⁷¹ Yet the branch of laurel leaves she holds in her hand takes her a step beyond purely Christian imagery. Laurel had carried with it the symbolism of martial fame and immortality long before the advent of Christianity. Shaped into a wreath, it was put on the heads of Greek athletes to mark their victories. The “Symbol of Canada” in the stained glass window of the Peace Tower holds a victory laurel wreath in her hand. The symbol of laurel was adapted into Christianity when the wreath was used to crown the martyrs.¹⁷² The cowl over her head, reminiscent of a veil worn in mourning, covers one side of her face and we can see underneath it that she holds her hand to her chin in a pose reminiscent of Rodin’s *Thinker*. The actual model for the “Spirit of Canada” was Edna Moynihan, who was told by Allward that he wanted to create “a mother figure with shoulders wide enough to carry the sorrows of dead sons.”¹⁷³

iv. Transitory Ritual: Pilgrimage to Vimy

The shoulders of the “Spirit of Canada” carried the drapery flag at the unveiling ceremonies of the Vimy Memorial. W.W. Murray, who compiled and edited the pilgrimage commemorative book, *The Epic of Vimy*, estimated that 100,000 people attended the ceremony, or, as one English newspaper more poignantly said, “there were as many people at the ceremony as there had been on the ridge on April 9th, 1917, the day of the battle” (Murray 1936:65). The *Winnipeg Free Press* was not so grand in its estimations, assuming there were approximately 50,000 in attendance (Coo 1936:4). Many of the pilgrims were

¹⁷¹ To one side of the crucifixion-style figure stands another man who by holding his torch high with what looks to be all his strength, reminds the viewer of the line, “To you from failing hands we throw/ The torch; be yours to hold it high” from John McCrae’s poem “In Flanders Fields.”

¹⁷² The crown of glory is also mentioned in Judaism and in Islam.

the bereaved, set apart from all the others by their blue berets. The ceremony at the Vimy monument was the pivotal event for those who were on the Vimy Pilgrimage. 6,200 pilgrims sailed from Montreal on July 16th and 17th of July (Murray 1936:9). They met with other Canadians who were living overseas and toured cities important to the war before returning home in August.¹⁷⁴

This was not the first organized tour of the post-war era to take the name of “pilgrimage.” The largest pilgrimage in this time period was in 1919/20, when two million people over the space of a year made their way to the Cenotaph in London (Lloyd 1998:39). In 1922, the King had made a pilgrimage to the Imperial War Graves in France and Belgium and several British monuments while 30,000 people travelled on a pilgrimage to Edith Cavell’s grave in Norwich, England, in November 1923. The American Gold Star Mothers went on pilgrimages at the expense of the government over a period of years. In 1930, for example, 3,653 mothers and widows travelled between May and September (Potter 1999:5).¹⁷⁵

Although it may be true, as Lloyd says, that “propaganda writers used the language of pilgrimage to give greater meaning to the loss caused by the war,” he also describes the

¹⁷³ Drusilla Mason told Paul Chapman the story of how her mother, Edna Moynihan, got the job with Allward (Chapman 1990:n.p.).

¹⁷⁴ *The Epic of Vimy* (1936), published by *The Legionary*, the official national magazine of the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League, included information concerning many of the small details of the journey such as the numbers for the provincial quotas, the names of the pilgrims and their province (or state if they were living in the US), the cost - \$160.00 which represented a 20% reduction off a third class fare, a list of pilgrimage equipment including the blue beret for bereaved relatives, the khaki beret for ex-sevicemen and women and directions on exactly how to wear them. The cost of the trip was further offset for some of the pilgrims by being given paid leave. The pilgrims were given reminders concerning their behavior, urging them to show “typical Canadian cheerfulness” (Hundevad 1936:18). This was thought to be particularly important because of the “shadow of bewildering crises” hanging over the world at that time (Hundevad 1936:18).

¹⁷⁵ Piehler notes in his article on the Gold Star Mothers that this extraordinary financial gesture of the American government towards the mothers should be recognized but it should also be remembered that the pilgrimage was “impossible to resist politically” (1994:177). At the same time that the government spent vast amounts on the pilgrimage, it refused to fund maternity clinics (Piehler 1994:177).

development of an “anti-tourist” sentiment in the nineteenth century that would have promoted the distinction between regular tours and travel done for a more distinguished reason (1998:19-25).¹⁷⁶ This sentiment also coincided with the opening up of the Holy Land to tourists, a natural destination for a trip promoted as a “pilgrimage” (Lloyd 1998:17). Another factor which would have encouraged people to accept a tour as a pilgrimage and not merely another example of battlefield tourism, was the language of sacrifice discussed in Chapter Two that surrounded the war. If the struggle had been a spiritual battle against evil and for goodness, truth, and justice, then certainly the battlefield could be considered a sacred site, the monument, a shrine with its central icon of a mourning mother, the road there, a “via dolorosa;” and the ones who travelled it, the disciples of those who had been sacrificed. The present-day Parks Canada sign at the Vimy Ridge Canadian Memorial Park still projects the image of the site’s sacredness by stating that, “The grounds of the Canadian Vimy Memorial Park have been hallowed by the sacrifice of those Canadians who died to preserve Freedom.”

However, the Vimy Pilgrimage had more in common with traditional pilgrimages than merely being couched in the descriptive language of religion. It included many of the characteristics of pilgrimages outlined by Victor Turner in his article “Pilgrimages as Social Processes” (1974).¹⁷⁷ A pilgrim’s journey is transitory in nature and marked by voluntary

¹⁷⁶ The tension involved over the understanding of pilgrimages versus tours is evident in the question asked in the poem, “Trippers in Belgium,” published in the *Evening News*, 18 June, 1919, “Yet is it well that high and sacred things,/ The scenes of martyrdom, the hero’s grave,/ Should furnish forth a trippers’ holiday?” (in Lloyd 1998:39).

¹⁷⁷ Turner’s model of pilgrimages has had a strong influence on subsequent scholars yet critiques have arisen concerning some of the interpretive concepts Turner used, particularly that of *communitas*, “the direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities” (1969:131). Turner suggests that pilgrims tend to relate to each other with this kind of immediacy with the suppression of their differences. M.J. Sallnow takes the concept of *communitas* to be actually detrimental to understanding pilgrimages because it tends to “inhibit an appreciation of the contradictions” he finds there (1998:183). Mary O’Connor on the other hand, found that

participation. Unlike other religious behavior, such as church attendance, travel on a pilgrimage is not a socially imposed religious activity for Christians.¹⁷⁸ A pilgrim leaves home and what is known in ordinary life to travel into the unknown. Turner believes that the pilgrim enters into a “communitas” or a feeling of shared identity with fellow travellers who are distinct from his or her regular group of acquaintances. This step into a new world, Turner believes, “liberates the individual from the obligatory everyday constraints of status and role, defines him as an integral human being with a capacity for free choice” (1974:207). For Turner, the closeness and equality pilgrims find is, “in theological language, a forgiveness of sins, where differences are accepted or tolerated rather than aggravated into grounds of aggressive opposition” (1974:208). Although subsequent scholars have been critical of Turner’s theories, it is likely that the Vimy pilgrims and the organizers of the pilgrimage would have approved of these descriptions. Whatever the status of the pilgrim, they shared the experience of having lived through the war and for most, if not all, it was a time when strong bonds were formed by people living lives fully committed to one cause. The pilgrimage was an opportunity to experience again something of those bonds for a short, and much safer, time.

The differences among the pilgrims were, however, clearly marked by their clothing and reflective of their varied experiences of the war. The bereaved, mainly women wearing their blue berets, experienced the war on the home front dependent on censored letters from the trenches and what Robert Graves called “newspaper language” (Graves 1966:202) for

although pilgrimages do reinforce some differences between the pilgrims, they are united by a belief in the sacredness of the place they have gone to visit (1999:375).

¹⁷⁸ A point that Mary O’Connor makes in her study of the Mexican pilgrimage to Magdalena is that the rituals involved in it were not related to Church teaching but rather fall under the category of folk Catholicism (1999:371). The Vimy pilgrimage was certainly not a form of folk religion but the rituals were presided over

their images of the battlefields on which they now walked. This view of the war would have bound them to the land and particularized its sacredness in ways that the veterans, marked on the pilgrimage by their khaki berets, would have found difficult to understand. For the veterans, the pilgrimage may have reflected something of the feeling of the closeness of the men during the war – a comradeship which those at home for the war would have had no experience.

Underlying the voluntary nature of a pilgrimage are a variety of motivations, yet they can be summed up as “essentially a form of penance” (Sallnow 1998:188). Those who traveled to Vimy may well have felt that they owed the dead at least the respect of a visit. For others, they may have believed they owed their lives, in actual fact or in a figurative sense, to those who died.

In Lloyd’s comparison between the pilgrimages and war commemorations of Britain, Australia, and Canada, he notes that the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) celebrations privileged the achievements of the servicemen over all others in the society both for the war effort and the creation of a national identity.¹⁷⁹ Canada, like Britain, allowed bereaved women a more important part in pilgrimages. The attention paid to the grief of the bereaved in the commemoration of the war served as a consolation to those who had lost family members in the war but it also helped to redirect the public’s attention from their dissatisfaction with post-war life. In the case of Canada, this focus on the bereaved also helped to draw people’s attention away from the divisions between

by both Protestant and Roman Catholics as well as the secular representatives thus allowing the pilgrimage to expand in meaning beyond the confines of one particular church’s interpretation of the event.

¹⁷⁹ A pilgrimage of bereaved mothers was organized in Australia with high hopes that it “should be possible to achieve the peace of the world by a union of mothers.” But with only four mothers going to the battlefield that hope did not live long (Lloyd 1998:196).

English and French Canadians that had been so exacerbated during the war. Bodnar explains in his book *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* that commemoration in general, “helps to avoid disorder and massive change and assuage fears by the continual tale of progressive and orderly transitions in the past” (Bodnar 1992: 246). This is not to say that officially organized pilgrimages are always designed as a top down control measure by governments in a bid for power. The pilgrimage, the monument, the ritual, the poem or the parade must resonate in the public mind to affect thoughts and shape memories.

There are many indications that the mothers were seen as the centre of the British Remembrance ceremonies. Bob Bushaway, in his description of the King’s pilgrimage of 1922, tells the story of the mother of Sergeant Matthews who wrote to the Queen enclosing a bunch of forget-me-nots and asking that they be placed on her sons’ grave in Étapes Cemetery. As the Queen was unable to go, the King brought the letter with him, found the grave, and put the mother’s flowers on it.¹⁸⁰ “This remarkable piece of theatre, whether consciously staged or a spontaneous act, was a microcosm of the whole visit” (Bushaway 1992:152).¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Harry Gosling, British M.P. and a member of the Imperial War Graves Commission, accompanied the King on this pilgrimage. Gosling described this scene in his memoirs adding that after the King placed the flowers “reverently” on the grave, “then, with that touch of completeness that characterizes all he does, he turned to the gardener and said: ‘Now see that you keep them watered as long as possible’” (Gosling 1927:223).

¹⁸¹ Adrian Gregory, making a similar point, quoted a British newspaper account of the Armistice Day ceremony in 1927. The story included the words of a mother who had lost four sons in the war spoken as she stood by the cenotaph: “I could see the Queen’s face quite clearly and it seemed to me to be pale with the sorrow which she was feeling for all the mothers whose sons never came back home... I felt proud of my sons and of their courage; I felt proud that I was their mother”(Daily Mail 12 Nov. 1927:12 as quoted by Gregory 1994:39). A similar point regarding the tribute paid to mothers is made by Lloyd who considers the prominence accorded to women on pilgrimages by looking at some of the names given to them in the news: “British Mothers of the Battlefields,” “March of Widows,” “A sad Procession to Tragic Park,” or the stories designed to pull at the heartstrings, “My Son – By a Pilgrim Mother,” published in the *Evening Standard* 8 August 1928 (Lloyd 1998:169).

The poignancy of the bereaved mother-image has great lasting power. In a *Maclean's* magazine article from 20 November 2000, Maryanne Lewell, a Parks Canada student guide at Vimy Ridge, wrote of her feelings about "Mother Canada" in the "Over to You" interest column which *Maclean's* reserves for public opinion. Saying that even though she knew little about Vimy when she went, when she first saw the statue of "Mother Canada", staring at the tomb of her fallen sons below" she "had to blink tears away." She lets the reader know further on in the article that she was not alone in this reaction. "'Mother Canada' makes visitors cry. In the guide package, we are told she faces east, towards the dawn – which brings the hope of peace" (Lewell 2000:9). The connection between the ideal of peace and the role of the Silver Cross mother will be examined in the next chapter.

The Canadian pilgrims at Vimy were certainly not all women but the bereaved mothers did have their place as is indicated in the Silver Cross mother's role in commemorative wreath laying and the appeal to the magnitude of the pain of the bereaved mothers as best reason for achieving peace. Many speeches delivered by politicians and priests at the unveiling contained as a common theme the hope of peace. The acting Prime Minister of Canada, the Hon. Ernest Lapointe, expressed the hope that the power of the "cries of mothers, the revolt of conscience and the right of the weak" would abolish force as the arbitrator of nations. "Humanity suffered too much during the War, martyred both in soul and spirit" and for this reason, peace must be attained (Lapointe in Murray 1936:94). This statement was made at a time of growing nervousness that war might again be close at hand. It is because of this atmosphere that in the rules of conduct laid out for the pilgrims in their guide book they were advised to take "care that no word or act – individually or

collectively – on the part of our parties shall show evidence of anything other than the best of feelings towards everyone in Europe, whether former enemies or allies” (Hundevad 1936:9).

In London, the Vimy pilgrims had a full program organized for them that included a ceremony at the Cenotaph. The music, hymns, and two minute silence were much like the Remembrance Day ceremonies performed today. The Bishop of London, Winnington-Ingram, pronounced the Benediction and wreaths were laid.¹⁸² After this ceremony the pilgrims went to the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior and Mrs. Wood in the company of three other Silver Cross mothers “representing Mothers of Canada who lost sons in the War” and an escort of fifty pilgrims, laid a wreath on the tomb (Murray 1936:126).¹⁸³ The diary of one of the Vimy pilgrims, Florence Murdock, mentions Mrs. Wood who must have appeared as a figure of some importance to the pilgrims (Beatty 1987:19).

It was not until 2000 that Canada brought home her Unknown Soldier from World War One. The interring of the Unknown Soldier in front of the cenotaph was a millennial project of the Legion and a celebration of their 75th anniversary. They chose to retrieve the remains of a soldier from Vimy Ridge. Not only does Vimy have Canada’s memorial to those who have no grave but the battle fought there in April 1917 has taken on great symbolism through subsequent years as the crucible for the birth of Canada. Soil from Vimy, along with the ten provinces and three territories, was dropped on the coffin before it was lowered into the sarcophagus. Many of the rituals of Remembrance Day were followed

¹⁸² Before the blessing the Bishop said that in 1915 he “had addressed 10,000 Canadians before the Second Battle of Ypres. ‘Of 72 young officers I spoke to before that battle, 42 were killed,’ he said, ‘and of those 10,000, half were either killed or wounded’” (Murray 1936:126).

¹⁸³ The guide book explains how these women were chosen “Each Party Leader will name sixteen pilgrims, a number of whom will be ladies, to represent the Pilgrimage at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior. This party

in this ceremony. Buglers, pipers, and the fly-past in the lost man formation surrounded the central Benediction and two minutes of silence. The official program states that after the covering of the sarcophagus there was a "Common Prayer for all Faiths." This appeal to those beyond the dominant religious culture represents an effort that began in the early days of the commemoration of the war.

v. Multicultural Iconography: The Cenotaph

The scale of death during the war was so massive and there were so many missing that all the major combatant nations erected tombs of unknown soldiers (Gillis 1994:11). Closely related in concept to the tombs were the cenotaphs that are monuments to people buried elsewhere. Just as many of the stories of the mothers in the previous chapter told how the mothers were to behave during the war, the same brave face was hoped for after the war. In a poem by the Canadian poet, A.M. Stephen, entitled "The Cenotaph," the mothers of British Columbia are advised on how they should behave in front of this monument. "O, young proud mother of the mountain-born,/ Weep not for these!... No funeral dirge or plaintive strain forlorn/ Should sound the passing of their chivalry./ Joyous, they gave their radiant youth to be/ A light transcendent o'er an age outworn" (1927:124). As in the early stories of the mother of martyrs in all the traditions discussed, these mothers are to be proud of their sons "joyous" sacrifice.

In writings about war monuments, the question of the motives of those who erected them is often raised by looking at how the structures attempt to shape the public memory of the war in support of the status quo. In both Europe and North America commemorations

will consist of those who lost near relatives in the War and will include the mother on the pilgrimage who lost

were, for the most part, “the preserve of elite males, the designated carriers of progress” (Gillis 1994:10). Eric Homberger, however, reflects in his article, “The Story of the Cenotaph,” that the situation in London showed more blind luck on the part of the government than well-thought intent in their production of the popular symbol of the war. This Greek term, cenotaph, literally referring to an empty tomb, was chosen as a concept for a memorial by the British in preference to the idea of a catafalque that was to be erected in Paris for the celebrations over the signing of the Peace Treaty.¹⁸⁴ A few weeks before the celebrations the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens was asked to design a non-denominational, temporary shrine, which he called a cenotaph (Homberger 1976: 1430). The monument was immediately so popular that the government decided to erect a permanent version. The British government in 1919 was deeply concerned with social unrest in industry and the army, so much so that the attention they paid to creating a war symbol was minimal and last-minute. Homberger argues that in the case of the cenotaph “it was the people not the government who made it such an unparalleled object of respect” (Homberger 1976:1429).

Robert Shipley raises the same issue with regard to the Canadian monuments across the country and comes to the same conclusions. They were built, he argues, as a matter of community consensus (but with none of the humour of bumbling good luck as the British had experienced with regard to the public support for the London cenotaph) (Shipley 1987:142). Shipley was speaking not only of the National War Memorial in Ottawa but of the many monuments across the country, a great number of which were funded by

the most sons” (Hundevad 1936:24).

¹⁸⁴ Catafalque has a Latin root relating to scaffold and refers to an ornamental structure used in funerals for the lying in state of a body. The British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, thought that the idea of a catafalque “would be rather foreign to the spirit of our people, however much in harmony it might be with the Latin temperament” (quoted in Homberger 1976:1430).

community collections. These, so to speak, “ground up” memorials came in many shapes and drew on symbolism from a variety of cultures and times. Some of the more interesting examples he gives are: the memorial stones that look like Northern European menhirs or standing stones (1987:105), the more than 200 cairns across the country -- one of the oldest place markers known to humans (1987:104), and the small versions of Egyptian pyramids and obelisks (1987:106). Shipley has catalogued approximately 1,200 monuments in Canada and has ordered them according to their shape: “Stelaë and cut-stone constructions – 32 percent; Statues – 27 percent; Cairns – 19 per cent; Crosses – 8 percent; Obelisks – 8 percent; and Architectural Monuments such as towers – 6 per cent” (1987:191).¹⁸⁵ Many of the larger cities in Canada built monuments modelled after Lutyens’ design in London. In fact the one in London, Ontario, is an exact, although smaller copy of the one in its namesake city (Shipley 1987:106).

From Shipley’s calculations we can see that the overt Christian symbolism on the war monuments is less common than other motifs. In many cases though, the symbolism does coincide with a Christian cosmology. The similarity between Christ’s empty tomb and that of the cenotaph is evident and it carries with it the associated hope of resurrection (Shipley 1987:143, Bushaway 1992:155, Sharpe 1981:108). As mentioned above, the symbolism of the laurel, so often portrayed on war memorials, originally had a pre-Christian significance that has been adapted into Christian iconography. This is true of the palm as well -- a symbol of victory that took on the meaning of victory over death. There are other images that, although not specifically Christian, have been read as such. The most

¹⁸⁵ New Zealand also had a large percentage of war monuments for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (Anzac) showing roots in traditions other than Christian. In her article “Anzac Day in New Zealand,”

famous symbol of the war, the blood-red poppy, is first to grow from overturned soil and hence has taken on the idea of resurrection as well (Shipley 1987:144, Sharpe 1981:109). The archway, like the one in the National War Memorial in Ottawa, was used by Romans to commemorate their victories, indicating a passing from one state of being to another: from war to victory and, in Christianity, from life to paradise.

Despite the prevalence of non-Christian motifs in the shape and design of the monuments, Shipley chooses to interpret both the structures and the Remembrance Day ritual, as many others with a Christian background would, as an image of Christ's sacrifice.

Like Christ and the Christian martyrs our soldiers died violent deaths. The Remembrance Day ceremony, like the Eucharist, attempts to account satisfactorily for their passing. At a critical point in the service the bugle sounds "The Last Post." That is the traditional end to the soldier's day. The Last Post symbolizes death and is followed by two minutes of silence... During the silence we reflect on the dead and mourn their passing. Their suffering in war is reminiscent of the martyrs' torment and of Christ's descent into hell. At the end of the two minutes, "Reveille" is sounded. That bugle call begins the day. What is symbolized by Reveille is an awakening and in fact a resurrection. The soldiers, by their sacrifice, are identified with a martyrdom that wins them eternal life (Shipley 1987:142).

Although it is easy to see how this view fits with the language of sacrifice during the war as well, the fact remains that soldiers are not remembered as martyrs and the services seem only distantly religious. There are two reasons for this. One was a question of orthodoxy. The equation of the soldiers' death with that of Christ, in its ability to redeem the living, would hardly be acceptable in orthodox Christianity, although it may have been acceptable to those like T.A. Patterson, Capt., Chaplain, quoted at the beginning of Chapter Two. Patterson gave voice to a common belief that it was the lowly soldiers who had a far better understanding of true Christianity than those who were doing the preaching inside

Maureen Sharp argues that this "suggests that the warrior code of the ancient world was more appropriate to

churches. It would not have been considered true to Christian teachings to allow that the soldiers were sanctified by their death – a notion implicit in the common language of sacrifice in the newspapers, in the stories of the mothers of heroes, and even in the words of some of the religious leaders. Despite the fact that someone with the stature of the Bishop of London, Winnington-Ingram, called the war dead martyrs, it is a title which had faded with time and there are very few like Shipley who would still refer to even the form of the soldiers' story as a martyrdom. But the soldiers' deaths, especially on such a massive scale, needed to be given a positive value. The bereaved needed to be consoled and as most religions are looked to for aid in this area, the format and sentiment of a religious tradition were borrowed for commemorative purposes but without the strict theology.¹⁸⁶

vi. Conclusion: Remembrance of an International War

The First World War was an international war. It brought together people from a variety of places and religious cultures. Even within Canada, although a majority of the people involved were of some Protestant denomination, there were Catholics, Jews, native Americans, and people who had come from different parts of the British Empire bringing with them their cultures and religions. To commemorate only one religious interpretation of that war would have been to misrepresent it and belittle its comprehensive destruction and consequent sorrow.

the Anzac story than Christian values" (1981:109).

¹⁸⁶ Lloyd mentions that in England, the development of this secular religious mix in the commemoration did not happen without a struggle. Despite barriers of theological interpretation, the Church of England made an effort to have greater control over the memory of the war by having the Unknown Warrior buried in Westminster Abbey. This was an attempt to create a rival shrine to the cenotaph (1998:87).

In Chapter One the point was made that there is a long cross-cultural history of the story of death and rebirth of a child. The core form of the ritual of Remembrance Day, the concept of the cenotaph, the symbol of the poppy can all be seen as reflections of this general story or of the specific case of Christianity. The same is true for the role of the Silver Cross mother. The proud mourning of a child sacrificed for a value deeply held by a society has a long history in religious traditions. The poignancy of this image, embedded in the role of the Silver Cross mother, is repeated in the “Spirit of Canada” of the Vimy memorial, in the art work of the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower and in the rituals enacted each November 11th.

Chapter Five: The Governance of Silent Cities

i. Introduction: Silent Mothers of Silent Cities

As time passes after a catastrophic event in human history, people's thoughts turn towards commemoration of the period of agony. What should be remembered and what forgotten? What shape will the selected memories take, what will they sound like, who will be chosen to give voice to them, where will that happen, and at what time? Chapter Four discussed some of the ways in which the First World War was commemorated and how the image of the bereaved mother fits into those structures. This last chapter will consider one more way in which the war was remembered, the cemeteries and, once again, how the mourning mother's role adapted to this form of commemoration.

Millions of men died in the First World War and they lie in cemeteries and fields all over the world. A large concentration of them are in northern France and Belgium on what was the Western Front. This is where most of the Canadians who fought and died in that war are now buried, whether by chance their bodies never having been found, or by design with a tombstone in a graveyard. A few months into the war it became evident to the British that a plan would have to be developed to cope with all the dead bodies of their soldiers. The need became so great so quickly that a committee was formed to bury the men and register the graves. This committee grew into the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC) that still controls the cemeteries where the dead from the commonwealth countries are buried from both the world wars under its new name, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

This chapter looks at the development of the IWGC particularly with respect to the role which it assumes on behalf of the bereaved relatives. In this analysis I will be aided by the work of Nicole Loraux, who has studied the mourning practices of women in ancient Greece and the controls that were legislated to limit those practices. Ancient Greece is certainly far removed in time from the early twentieth century but the similarities in dealing with the commemoration of death between World War One and the ancient Greeks have been discussed by scholars. It was noted in the previous chapter, for example, that the cenotaph was an architectural concept borrowed from the Greeks. Other examples of Greek methods of coping with the dead and the missing will be examined and compared with those used by the IWGC. These discussions will illustrate how mourning was controlled so as not to challenge the decisions of the state. The Silver Cross mother as a symbol of the bereaved relative was, during the war, a powerful recruiter for what was presented as a just and noble cause. After the war she added sanctity and support to the image of a war fought for peace. This image was in part constructed through the work of the IWGC that created beautiful, orderly cemeteries of identical tombstones in long rows mirroring the memory of soldiers in uniform marching with purpose.

The carnage of the war was covered over and great efforts were made to match pieces of bodies with names and put under and on tombstones. The atrocities, so well promoted by the British propaganda during the war, were to be forgotten. An example of this, already discussed, was the sculpture, "Canada's Golgotha". This artwork, based on the widely spread rumour of the crucified Canadian, was put in storage from 1919 until 1992.¹⁸⁷ The IWGC was very careful in their choice of wording used on all memorials so as

¹⁸⁷ See above, Chapter Two. The statue was exhibited intermittently from 1992-2001.

not to incite any desire for revenge. In this manner it reflected some of the ideal of an amnesty in the original sense of the term – not as pardon nor as grace but as an Act of Oblivion. The first amnesty that occurred in Athens in 403 BCE is discussed by Nicole Loraux in her essay “On Amnesty and Its Opposite” in which she argues that the control of women’s lamenting was part of this amnesty (Loraux 1998). Following her logic I show how the role of the Silver Cross mother promoted a sense of forgetting. But remembrance is part of what she does as well. The role of the Canadian Silver Cross mother exists within the balance between remembering and forgetting with which each nation, having been involved in war, must grapple. Her role was that of chief mourner providing Canadians with the comforting thought that the ideal would be remembered.

Recently, Memorial Crosses have been awarded to mothers of peacekeepers: keepers of the terms of amnesty. The symbol of this cross thus connects the nationalist ideals of past and present. The emphasis placed on World War One as the birth of Canada on the international stage is paralleled by the vision of peacekeepers as a Canadian institution having a positive impact on the world. As the Silver Cross mother lays her wreath on the cenotaph or the Peacekeeper’s monument on United Nations day, she balances both remembrance and forgetting.¹⁸⁸

ii. Greek Ideas of War, Death and Democracy

1. Pericles and World War One: Designing the Cemeteries

The framing of the commemorative architecture and understanding of the war with elements of Greek culture is evident in the *Guide Book of the Pilgrimage to Vimy and the*

¹⁸⁸ National Peacekeeping Day is celebrated on the Sunday closest to United Nations Day, October 24.

Battlefields July – August 1936. The editor, John Hundevad, ended his short descriptive section on “The Gardens of the Dead” – the cemeteries -- with a quote from the funeral oration of Pericles praising the Athenian heroes after the first battle of the Peloponnesian War (431 BCE). The oration was first quoted in Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War*, Book 2.34-46. He prefaced Pericles’ words by explaining that this panegyric was part of the prescribed ritual that Athenians followed in the burying of their war-dead. Three days before the ceremony, the bones of the dead were taken from the tents where they had been laid out and were put in coffins to be carried to the suburb of Athens where they were to be buried in a public sepulchre. The procession was open to anyone interested in attending, but it was expected that the female relatives of the dead would be there to wail at the burial.

Two details of Thucydides’ description of the ancient Greek ritual were folded into the commemoration of the dead during World War One. In both wars the issue was raised concerning how to remember the missing, those whose bodies could not be recovered. The number of missing in World War One was so immense that they became a large part of the character of the war. Of the 1,104,890 soldiers who were commemorated by the Imperial War Graves Commission, 517,773 were designated as missing (Ware 1937:26). Many nations built monuments to the missing with the names of the men inscribed on the walls. Combatant nations built tombs of the unknown soldier symbolically pointing to all the soldiers who were buried elsewhere. In Chapter Four the Greek heritage of the cenotaph – the empty tomb – was discussed as one way in which many communities in Canada and England commemorated their war dead buried far away. The way the Greeks dealt with their missing war dead after the first battle of the Peloponnesian war was to decorate an

empty bier to signify all those whose bodies could not be found on the battlefield. It travelled with those from the other tribes to the burial ground.

Thucydides mentions that there were exceptions to the rule of the dead being buried in the suburb of Athens, and these were the heroes of Marathon “who for their singular and extraordinary valor were interred on the spot where they fell” (*Peloponnesian War*, Book 2.34-46). The IWGC attempted to give this mark of distinction to each soldier who died in the First World War. The effort to bury the soldiers on or near the spot where they died was one of the guiding principles of the IWGC although often a very difficult one to abide by considering the shattered state in which many of the bodies were found.

The sites for the monuments to those whose bodies were never located or identified were chosen with the above principle as well, of marking the spot on or near where the soldier died. Of the 11,285 names of the missing Canadians on the Vimy Memorial not all had died during the battle for the ridge but that is where many lost their lives.

The excerpt from the funeral oration which Hundevad chose to include in the *Guide Book of the Pilgrimage to Vimy* is appropriate to the themes of remembrance and the missing that provided some of the structure to the principles of the IWGC.

... each has gained a glorious grave – not that sepulchre of each wherein they lie, but the loving tomb of everlasting remembrance wherein their glory is enshrined, remembrance that will live on the lips, that will blossom in the deeds of their countrymen the world over. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of heroes; monuments may rise and tablets be set up to them in their own land, but on far-off shores there is an abiding memorial that no pen or chisel has traced; it is graven, not on stone or brass, but on the living heart of humanity (Hundevad 1936:44).

This section follows Pericles’ description of why Athens was worth fighting for. He asserted Athens’ leadership among states in its democratic policies favouring the many instead of the few, in its openness of the city to the world, and its cultivation of knowledge.

These qualities, and many others, were what made the state worth fighting for. Knowing that the cause was a good one, he argued, would help the bereaved to cope with their loss. In speaking first to the parents of the soldiers, he pointedly offered them comfort not condolences. The comfort came from the pride they must feel at their sons' noble death. He insisted that those who are young enough should have more children, not only to help them forget their loss¹⁸⁹ but more importantly, because in making public policy, no one is more fair than the man who brings with his decisions the interests and apprehensions of a father. Thucydides, in his prefacing remarks, does not mention the mothers who, of course, were not citizens in this democracy. The only reference he makes to the female relatives of the dead was the expectation that they would be there to wail.

2. Regulations on Mourning

a. Controlling the Mothers' Wails

Where the women were allowed to wail and for how long was governed by the state. Loraux's reading of Thucydides' description of the funeral ceremony suggests that he does not include women in the procession to the burial site because women, and particularly mothers, must be dealt with firmly for the safety of the city, so that they do not have an adverse effect on public support for the war. Loraux has compiled a summary of laws limiting women's mourning in Sparta, Athens, and Rome. As one might expect from the stories of the Spartan mother, Sparta allowed the shortest period for women's mourning of twelve days. Athens and Argos allowed one month and in Rome the period lasted for nine

¹⁸⁹ See note 38. The concept of replacement children has a long and wide history as a means of consolation.

or ten months unless the city was dealing with exceptional circumstances such as a great defeat, in which case mourning was allowed for thirty days (Loraux 1998: 31-32).

Loraux agrees with what is a common interpretation of funerary laws as “antiaristocratic measures aimed at curbing luxury and expenses” and argues that they had the most effect on women, who were the most prominent mourners (Loraux 1998:19). Because the laws served to control the public expenditures of the nobility, they worked towards evening out the financial discrepancy among the people. In this way they are linked with the democratization of the state, providing for an equality of expression among men. Loraux finds proof for this interpretation in the democratic regimes of ancient Greece where “women are even farther removed from the political sphere... than under other constitutions” (1998:20).

Taking this argument one step further, Loraux emphasizes that the main concern in the limiting of mourning, which essentially means the limiting of the role of women, is to ensure the stability of the city (1998:21). If a mourning mother turns her passion into anger against the state then it can become volatile and dangerous.

b. The Power of a Mourner's Curse

Loraux begins her discussion on the power of the bereaved mothers of ancient Athens with a reference to Shakespeare's *Richard II*: the “scene of mothers” in which three queens lament the death of their sons. One of the queens states that her sorrow is “general”, meaning that a mother's sorrow “contains all mourning within itself” (Loraux 1998:3). This is a very powerful emotion which can turn into a desire for revenge. Queen Margaret takes her own hatred and turns it into a lesson on how to curse:

Forbear to sleep the night, and fast the day;
Compare dead happiness with living woe;
Think that thy babes were fairer than they were,
And he that slew them fouler than he is:
Revolving this will teach thee how to curse (*Richard III*, Act 4, scene 4, 118-23).

In general, monuments are constructed in peacetime, when it is no longer state policy to “nurse” the desire for revenge. One does not often see war memorials commemorating a hatred leading to a curse. An exception is the one in Péronne, France. The Péronne memorial, inscribed “À Nos Morts,” depicts a woman in peasant clothes down on her knees beside the dead body of a soldier (See Plate 13). The statue is called “Picardie Maudissant La Guerre.”¹⁹⁰ The woman looks grimly forward holding out one arm in front of her with a clenched fist facing upwards. She curses those who brought war and death. These could be seen as both the leaders and the enemy. At no time is it profitable for the state to have the power of the bereaved mothers turn against it, discouraging others from sending their sons to war, or in peacetime, condemning decisions the state has made.

During a war, mourning must serve to improve the state’s ability to fight, calling on the honour and courage of men to defend their home. Afterwards, it must not endanger the peace by either inciting revenge against the enemy or by prompting a backlash against the state questioning the decisions of the leaders and their right to lead. A mother full of curses for the enemy during peacetime can undermine state authority.

The power of the mourning mother is what Loraux examines during the Amnesty of 403 BCE. This amnesty was devised after the rule of the Thirty Tyrants when civil war ripped Athens apart. Originally the decree of amnesty, stating that it was forbidden to recall misfortunes, was upheld by oath only. Senators and dicasts took the oath against

¹⁹⁰ Picardie is the region of France in which Péronne lies, in the centre of what was the Western Front.

recollection annually (Dorjahn 1970:34). Women, not being citizens, would not have been expected to take any oaths to forget, yet, according to Loraux, they were commonly known as the “keepers of memory” (1998:16). But if memory turns to anger, as it does in the cursing mothers, it can be a danger to the state -- “anger as mourning makes the ills it cultivates ‘grow’ assiduously, and it is a bond that tightens itself until it resists all untying” (Loraux 1998:98). Thus the keepers of memory and specifically the mourning mothers must have their emotions controlled for the sake of the community.

Adrian Gregory, in his book on the development of Armistice Day, sees a similar circumscription of mourning behaviour happening during World War One for the sake of the state. He commented that “the requirements of national morale prevented extravagant mourning in wartime” (1994:21). Public mourning behavior like the proud mother of the sacrificed represents not just a repression of mourning but changed parameters. The parameters change in part to accommodate the needs of the bereaved, both the individuals and the state, so that they participate in the creation of a story that makes sense of the loss and finds something positive in it.

An example of the containment of mourning is found in the workings of the IWGC. And, just as Loraux unites the control of women’s mourning with the growth of democratization, so too, we can see that the strict control asserted by the IWGC is associated with their efforts to assert a sense of equality among all who were sacrificed in the war. The Imperial War Graves Commission was faced with an immense physical task and needed to reach beyond their immediate cultural experience to create the principles which would govern their work. As will be seen in the next section, elements of ancient Greek thought run parallel to the scheme developed by the commission.

iii. Balancing Equality and Individuality

1. Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC): Its History

The Imperial War Graves Commission had its origins in the Joint War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem. The committee began its work in September 1914 by sending out a Mobile Unit to the battlefield to search for missing soldiers. For the next year, until the work was taken over by the Army, the committee was supplied by the Red Cross with the means to mark and register British graves (Ware 1937:23). By 1916, Dominion representatives had been appointed to share in the decisions concerning the graves, and in 1917 a charter constituting the Imperial War Graves Commission was adopted. The guiding principles set out in 1918 were described by Fabian Ware, vice-chairman of the commission: “(1) the memorials should be permanent, (2) the headstones should be uniform, and (3) there should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank” (Ware 1937:30).

The historian Edmund Blunden emphasized the efforts of the commission to remember the names of fallen soldiers.¹⁹¹ The only precedent for this act came during the American Civil War when a general of the Union army ordered that each battlefield have a spot for burial and that the soldiers be buried as soon as possible in marked graves with their names. “By 1866 there were forty-one such cemeteries containing over 100,000 Union soldiers” (in Longworth 1967:xx).

The naming of the war dead was still a relatively new concept by 1914 and it was stretched far beyond its original scope because of the predominate characteristic of the vast

number of missing. The naming of the dead not only served to recognize the efforts of each man but also served to democratize what was one of the most hierarchical institutions in the world – the military. In the past, only military leaders had been remembered. In the commemoration of World War One each soldier's life was to be seen as equal whether he had been a general or a private.¹⁹² Longworth believed that the principle of equality developed under Ware's leadership of the IWGC reflected the servicemen's experience of comradeship in the field (1967:13). This feeling was certainly present in many situations even among the men crossing enemy lines as was evidenced in the famous Christmas truce of 1914 when the men played and sang together and shared their supplies. But the divide between officers, mainly from upper class families, and their men was often deeply resented by the men, so the equality of all soldiers in death may reflect more of a vision than a reality. Still, it was an extraordinary vision for the time. In setting aside military hierarchy, the IWGC was also choosing to set aside the class structure embedded within the military.

Early on in the war the Commission recognized that dealing with the dead was only part of their responsibility. The concerns of the bereaved relatives had also to be met. Thus, they appointed members who would keep in touch with the relatives who were, as Ware describes them, "the natural guardians of the graves" (1937:61).¹⁹³ Mourning and burial practices were seen as a family matter but the development of the policy for the IWGC was

¹⁹¹ Blunden wrote the introductions to two books on the Commission, the first by Ware in 1937 and the second by Longworth in 1967. In both cases he stressed the novelty of the Commission's work.

¹⁹² Another institution which served the men as equals was Talbot House in Poperinge, Belgium. The house was bought by Neville Talbot in remembrance of his brother Gilbert, who had been killed in the war and set up as a safe haven for any soldier. It is still running as a hostel and museum and veterans from World War One were travelling there to visit as recently as the last ten years. With help, even those over 100 years old were able to make it up the tiny staircase to the third floor chapel.

¹⁹³ The "natural" rights of the relatives to have some control in the burial of their dead sons was also understood by the horticulturalists who developed a policy of planting flowers and grasses originally from Red Cross funds and saw themselves as acting "in loco parentis" (Longworth 1967:15).

not. Not one woman was included among the names of the commissioners from all the Dominions in Ware's history of the commission's first twenty years. Women's organizations had pressured the commission to have a female representative but to no avail (Longworth 1967:29). Longworth reasoned that the members early on were Victorian "gentlemen" bound by values that were insulted by the suffragette movement and blind to the work women had done during the war. Although one of the original members of the commission, Harry Gosling, a Labour M.P., had brought up the issue of female representation at a commission meeting, "others hinted at female inefficiency and the matter went no further" (Longworth 1967:29). In the end, Gosling felt confident that "the Commission is as representative of every different political view and social class as it is possible for any body to be" (1927:223). This belief would have easily enabled him, and the others on the commission who likely shared his view, to dismiss the "thought that bereaved mothers and wives had a right to formulate policy" (Longworth 1967:29).

The family did have the right to have an inscription of their choice added to the bottom of the tombstone. The inscription had to be quite short to fit into the small space and the Commission had the final say on whether or not it was acceptable. The general rule for the words on the tombs was that "nothing was allowed to be said in any inscription which would tend to perpetuate international ill-will" (Ware 1937:38). Although a majority of the German dead who are buried in Belgium or France lie in German cemeteries, there are some German soldiers who are buried alongside the Commonwealth dead. Friends and families from all over the world, including Germany would be visiting these cemeteries, so the Commission did not want words of revenge or great emotion.

The IWGC's control over the actions and words of the bereaved extended beyond their prohibition of extravagant inscriptions on the tombstones to a prohibition on building personal monuments near the graves that may have marked class and financial differences. The guiding principles of permanency also meant that no bodies would be repatriated but would stay on or near the spot where the men died.¹⁹⁴ Although the energy and finances committed by the IWGC to the burial and registration of the dead soldiers was considerable, it would have been far more demanding to repatriate the bodies and, considering the conditions of battle, almost impossible.¹⁹⁵ The decision not to repatriate any remains was made during the war yet some did try to circumvent the rule. The remains of the grandson of the British Prime Minister, W.E. Gladstone, were sent home after pressure was exerted on the IWGC. Ware did not want to see a situation develop where those with the finances could remove the bodies of their sons and those without could not. To ensure that this would not happen again he succeeded, by giving reasons of hygiene, in having a ruling put in place against exhumations (Longworth 1967:14). Where the locals in France were able, they were encouraged to care for the soldiers' graves and Ware hoped that their interest would have an effect on the relatives after the war so they would be less likely to want to move the remains of their sons (Longworth 1967:22). For the most part families were content to leave their sons buried in the graveyards but there were a few stories of Canadian parents digging up the remains of their boys after the war and attempting, unsuccessfully, to bring them home (Vance 2000: 62-3). It was difficult for many not to

¹⁹⁴ See also above on the burial of bodies where they fell.

¹⁹⁵ The American government offered the families of the dead soldiers the choice of whether or not to repatriate their bodies. About seventy percent chose to repatriate, although the difficulties in accomplishing this were indicated by the resignation of the head of the American war graves service who "could not guarantee that the right bodies would go to the right relatives" (Vance 2000:61).

have their sons brought home, but for the purposes of the IWGC, keeping the soldiers from all over the Commonwealth together in immense graveyards served to magnify and unify the effect of the sacrifice – a message which they were intent on communicating.

The commission is as firm in its resolve today as it was during and just after the war to leave the graves undisturbed.¹⁹⁶ A poignant reason given by Ware as to why it was so important to not move the graves was because soldiers had been promised that if they brought back their dead comrades, at some risk to themselves, to previously designated cemetery sites, their friends would stay there permanently. Considering this, it is easy to see how difficult it would be for the French government to move forward on its recently announced plan to put in a new airport near Paris necessitating the movement of 1,250 Commonwealth graves. This plan has been taken very seriously by the Commission which called a meeting of the affected member nations to see how best to voice their concerns (Campbell 2002:1,2).

The policy of not moving the bodies once they were buried was acceptable to Muslims who disapproved of exhumation. But the commission had more difficulty in coming to a happy compromise regarding the distinctive grave markings wanted by both Muslims and Hindus. Baker and Lutyens were to design Mosque and Temple memorials, but this idea was abandoned when further requests were made by Sikhs and Gurkhas to

¹⁹⁶ There were times when the soldiers' bodies were exhumed to be placed in a graveyard if their bodies had initially been buried in places where the graves could not be maintained. But, if the graves were near a designated cemetery they would be left. Many of the cemeteries have a majority of the graves in one spot in rows and a number of single graves in dispersed locations, indicating that the latter stayed where they were initially buried.

have their own commemorative monuments and the commitments became more than the Commission was willing or able to take on (Longworth 1967:37).¹⁹⁷

2. Their Name Liveth for Evermore: Words and Shapes Used by the IWGC

The words which we have come to associate with the commemoration of the war dead were for the most part composed or decided upon by the British fiction author, Rudyard Kipling. The message of equality among the soldiers and among the armies made up of men from a wide variety of cultures is apparent in both the words and the shapes chosen to frame the memory of the war. Hundevad stated in his guide book to the Vimy pilgrimage, "By their very uniformity they speak in one voice of one death, one sacrifice, for a cause that was common to all" (1937:37).

A majority of the tombstones of the Commonwealth cemeteries were carved from Portland stone with a slightly rounded top to help preserve them against the elements. All the stones are on a cycle such that they will receive upkeep every twelve years (Ware 1937:59). Originally the graves were marked with wooden crosses as John MacCrae's poem tells us, "between the crosses row on row," but stone was necessary to replace them as the wood quickly rotted and the names disappeared off the wood even faster. These crosses were piled up beside the cemeteries and were often taken away as souvenirs by pilgrims.

¹⁹⁷ One area where the Commission succeeded in bringing together the emblems of all the countries of the Empire was in a memorial plaque. It was, according to Ware, "the only sculptural memorial to express the union of the partner nations of the Commonwealth" (Ware 1937:36). Ware's description of "partner" nations indicates a perception of hope of equality among the countries of the commonwealth which few of those countries would have seen either before or after the war. Yet the symbol of unity was so important that the plaques were known as the Commission's "coping stone" (Ware 1937:36). These plaques were erected throughout France as well as in Westminster Abbey stating, "To the Glory of God And to the Memory of One Million Dead Of the British Empire Who Fell In the Great War 1914 – 1918 And of Whom the Greater Part Rest In France."

Some of these souvenirs or relics are to be found in churches in Canada, such as St. Paul's Cathedral in Toronto, as well as in museums, such as the Canadian War Museum.

The shape of the tombstones was significant to the philosophy of the IWGC and the message it was trying to convey. One might have thought that having crosses as markers originally, they would have maintained that symbol as did the French in their graveyards. Some say that the idea of the crosses was rejected because it left too little room for inscription (Laqueur 1994:161). Although this may be true it is likely that the uniformity of the shape for all Commonwealth soldiers was more important to the IWGC. By having a non-denominational shape the commission was able to promote the idea of uniformity while at the same time inscribing each stone with the religious symbol of the soldier. The Commission asked the families what religious insignia they wanted on the tombstones. Clearly the "default" religion was seen to be Christianity for if the family could not be contacted then a cross was put on the tombstone. A majority of the stones have Latin Crosses cut into them, some have nothing at all, and on others, the Star of David, or symbols from Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Islamic, Bahai and Zoroastrian traditions are carved. There was also room for the insignia of a soldier's regiment or the symbol of their country, their name, date of birth and death.¹⁹⁸ The decision to have the regimental insignia put on the stone allowed the IWGC to maintain uniformity while declaring the individuality of each soldier. There was an effort to balance the philosophical value of individuality with that of equality (Longworth 1967:30). Both of these efforts were new at the time in the commemoration of dead soldiers.

¹⁹⁸ The Registry of Names provided one other area for the families to present more information about their dead relatives. In each cemetery these books are kept in a small box in the wall or small monument of the

Each individual man was remembered through the inscription of his name on the memorial to those without a grave, but some of these soldiers were also remembered in another way. There are over 150,000 war graves containing unidentified dead whose tombstones record what personal information was available, maybe their nationality and date of death, but all of them have the words composed by Kipling, "Unknown Soldier" or "A Soldier of the Great War" followed by, "Known Unto God."

Kipling also chose the words "Their Name Liveth For Evermore" to be written on the Stone of Remembrance. This quote from the Book of Ecclesiasticus deliberately omitted the previous phrase that might have offended Hindus because of its reference to buried bodies.¹⁹⁹ The Stone of Remembrance and the Cross of Sacrifice are two standard memorials that vary only according to the size of the cemetery. The former was designed by Lutyens, who had in his mind "a great fair stone of fine proportions, twelve feet in length, lying raised upon three steps and bearing in indelible lettering some fine thought or words of sacred dedication" (Ware 1937:54).²⁰⁰ When Ware wrote his history in 1937, 560 Stones of Remembrance had been set up. They are placed in cemeteries containing 400 or more war dead or near to some of the memorials to the missing (Gibson 1989:230). A majority of these stones, which look very much like altars, were cut from the same Portland stone as the tombstones. Having no reference to any particular faith, they serve as an emblem of sacrifice for all.

graveyard and contain the names of the men buried there and some biographical information about them submitted by the families.

¹⁹⁹ "Their bodies buried in peace" is the preceding phrase from the Hymn in Honour of Our Ancestors in Ecclesiasticus 44:2-13.

²⁰⁰ Lutyens carries on to give details on the measurements of the surfaces and planes of his design describing how the vertical lines converge up to a point 1,801 feet, 8 inches above the centre of the spheres. Longworth states that this design was based on a study of the Parthenon (1967:36).

Although efforts were made by the commission to be at best inclusive of other faiths and cultures, or at least not offensive, the predominately Christian influence is seen in the other memorial which stands in the Commonwealth cemeteries, the Cross of Sacrifice designed by Reginald Blomfield. By 1937 there were close to 1000 Crosses of Sacrifice erected in the cemeteries.²⁰¹

The words which are probably the best known symbols of the war, “Lest We Forget”, have taken on a life past that of the First World War but were actually part of a poem written before the war. In 1897, Kipling wrote “Recessional” for the Queen’s Golden Jubilee (Kipling 1989:327). The first four verses end with the line, “Lest we forget, lest we forget!” Although composed at the height of the British Empire, this was a cautionary tale warning its readers that the Empire’s strength could melt away in a moment and that faith should be placed in God and his “ancient sacrifice” rather than the iron of the Empire.

Far-call’d our navies melt away –
On dune and headland sinks the fire –
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget, lest we forget.

The context of a Christian world view has long faded and the words “Lest We Forget” are used throughout the documentation of commemoration proscribing selective forgetting and remembering that has little to do with the power of the divine. Imbedded in the warning to remember is the demand to forget. The stories of atrocities which were once so important during the war and which the government censors ensured audiences would be aware of, must now be consigned to oblivion. On the other hand, it is important to

²⁰¹ The Crosses come in four sizes depending on the size of the cemetery. The smallest are usually on sites

remember the number of dead, their names and beware of human weakness and the possibility of falling into war again.

3. Their Stories are Told: Canadian Women for a Political Voice

The words and structures of the IWGC were designed to promote a message of unity among equals in the sacrifice of the men. In their efforts to convey this message the IWGC took on the role of the bereaved but the voices of the mothers were heard in other places, just as had occurred in ancient Greece. Despite the control on women's mourning in ancient Greece, stories of anguish were told during times of war. Loraux (1998) argues that what was repressed in the public and political realm was expressed in the theatre. Moses Hadas comments in his introduction to Aristophanes' plays that in Athens "the amazing thing is that plays attacking the war policy when the state was at war could be given under state auspices" (Hadas 1962:8). An example of this was Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. Its comic treatment of the deeply serious topic of war is able to reach the core of perennial issues surrounding the experiences of war. The play was presented just after the Sicilian disaster of 413 BCE when Athens failed in its efforts to take over Sicily. The solution it offers to end the war is a sex strike by the women. The women argue that it is time that they were heard in spite of the fact that they are not citizens, for, as they say in the voice of the Chorus, "It should not prejudice my voice that I'm not born a man,/ If I say something advantageous to the present situation./ For I'm taxed too, and as a toll provide men for the nation" (Hadas 1962:309).²⁰²

where there are forty or more graves (Gibson and Ward 1989:219).

²⁰² A voice of one "taxed" in this manner was heard many centuries later when she spoke out after the American Civil War. Julia Ward Howe, known for being the author of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," was

Canada, with its censorship laws during the war, was not so free to present criticism of the war effort but this same argument of the political right of a mother to be heard was repeated during the First World War. In an *Everywoman's World* article of April 1915 twelve well-known Canadian women were asked what "they hope[d] to see as the outcome of the war." This article was billed as the first national expression of opinion by Canadian women and it was thought that the wide selection of women would mean that their collective views would represent the thoughts of Canadian, American, and in fact, women from all over the world. L. M. Montgomery, a frequent contributor to *Everywoman's World*, wrote, "I do hope that [the war] will in some measure open the eyes of humanity to the truth that the women who bear and train the nation's sons should have some voice in the political issues that may send those sons to die on battlefields" (Murphy et al. 1915:7). Montgomery's views are essentially the same as that of the women of *Lysistrata* but more direct.

Nellie McClung tied women's role, or lack of it, in the democratic state with the state's inability to find peace. Of all women she speaks of the importance of the mother's voice.

Man's pride in masculine statecraft has received a jolt, and they are not so sure of things as they were four months ago! There can be no true democracy where one-half of the race is ignored, and this war, if it has any significance at all, is a war against autocracy. The mother's point of view will be represented in the days to

also the originator of the celebration of Mother's Day, which in 1872 was called Mother's Peace Day. Although her first claim to fame was through her efforts to encourage the soldiers during the war, she later questioned the value of war and the role of the mothers, "Why do not the mothers of mankind interfere in these matters, to prevent the waste of that human life of which they alone bear and know the cost?" (Howe 1969:328). Her efforts to join motherhood with a movement to support peaceful resolutions of conflict were subdued by the common belief that women did not have a place in the political realm (Illick 2000). The version of Mother's Day that we now celebrate in Canada had its origins in Mothers' Work Days in the early twentieth century. The American Anna Jarvis proposed that mothers be involved in a day of community service to help improve their world (Illick 2000).

come—the good days to which our longing eyes are turning in hope and faith (Murphy et al. 1915:33)

Flora MacDonald Denison, Honourary President of the Canadian Suffrage Association, also hoped that a stronger democracy would evolve out of the war. This would come when the “female constructive mind” and her “maternal instinct” were given equal political and economic rights. Most of the women did see a greater political role for women both as an outcome of the war and as a means to improving the world and its possibilities for peace. The democratic ideal that the IWGC wanted to show and promote in its commemoration of the war was, like that of ancient Athens, a promotion of equality among men. The Canadian women at this time were arguing for an equal voice among men and women in the governance of the state.

4. To Keep Peace: Amnesty and Peacekeepers

Many of the women spoke in grandly idealistic terms of hopes of a new internationalism where nations would join forces and prejudices would dissolve. Emily Murphy, known by her pen name of Janey Canuck, pinned these same ideals on particular solutions such as the arbitration of international issues by the Hague Court, the establishment of an international police force, disarmament and equal status for women. But before these tactics could be contemplated she hoped to see an “amnestia.”

When in the year 400 B.C., at a time of great bitterness of feeling, Thrasyblus, one of the chief men of Athens, came to the head of affairs, he exerted his influence to secure the passage of a law they called *amnestia*, from a Greek word signifying no recollection. The law provided that all former quarrels and offences be forgotten, and that the people take pledge to live peaceably towards each other as if the offences had never taken place. Yes! Let this be the way of it – that John, Jean,

Johann, and Jack sponge off their memories all red-written records (Murphy et al. 1915:6).

Sadly those who devised the Versailles Treaty had not learned a great deal about this first amnesty and how well-respected it had been by all who knew of it. Nor were they able to see ahead to the work which the IWGC was soon to do in its commemoration of the war dead of enemy and allied nations as equals. In presenting an image of the dead as equals the IWGC made an effort to live up to a phrase coined in 1914 by H.G. Wells describing the war as "The War that will end War." Initially this was to refer to the end of Prussian militarism but it came to mean the war that would bring peace forever (Gregory 1994:122). This phrase, although it mutated slightly into "the war to end all wars," stuck throughout the war and in the inter-war period as a hopeful description of the massive destruction.

We know that World War One famously failed in this task, as have the intervening wars, yet Remembrance Day has peace as a focus.²⁰³ The peace terms at the end of World War Two came closer to the ideals of the original amnesty making political room for a functioning United Nations and for the development of an international peace and police force. The Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, L.B. Pearson, announced the idea of this force to the United Nations General Assembly in November 1956. As a man of his times, Pearson went beyond the belief that war would eventually bring peace. "The best defense of peace is not power, but the removal of the causes of war, and international

²⁰³ Jonathan Vance outlines the process by which peace became included as a focus of Remembrance Day during the inter-war years. Part of the emphasis on peace arose from a suggestion, made by the National Council of Women and the Canadian Legion in 1938, to "observe Remembrance Day as a day of thanksgiving for peace" (2000:218). This suggestion was taken up by Prime Minister Mackenzie King with the resulting

agreements which will put peace on a stronger foundation than the terror of destruction” (Pearson 1964:13). He made this statement on 11 December 1957 in his Nobel Peace Prize Lecture in Oslo, Norway. Pearson received the Nobel Peace Prize for the total of his years of work for peace but this is not how it is remembered in Canada. According to Pearson’s editor, S. Pierson, he is remembered for having received the prize for the development of the peacekeeping forces (Pierson in Pearson 1964:147). Because of this, peacekeepers have become “Canadian” – at least as far as Canadians are concerned! ²⁰⁴

In September 1988, the Peacekeepers of the United Nations themselves received a Nobel Peace Prize. Building on the heightened profile of the peacekeepers and ensuring that Canada be clearly associated with them in the minds of Canadians, the suggestion arose to erect a monument to Canadian peacekeepers. The “Canadian Monument to Honour Peacekeepers, Past, Present and into the Future” was unveiled in 1992. It is noted on the brief on the monument that it is the only monument in the world dedicated to peacekeepers (Gardam 2002)

Peacekeepers are still promoted by government agencies as having a special connection with Canada. The Canadians who fought in World War One were presented as fighting for peace and for those who died, their death was taken as payment for Canada achieving the status of nationhood in the eyes of the world. Peacekeepers are now presented by government as the ones who carry an image of Canada onto the world scene. The Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade makes explicit what they

addition to Canada’s myth of the First World War of the soldier being viewed as “the guardian, even the servant, of peace” (Vance 2000:218).

²⁰⁴ The historian and former head of the Canadian War Museum, Jack Granatstein, sees this “ownership” taking place as early as 1960 when troops were sent to the Congo (Granatstein and Lavender 1992:188).

see as the connection between Canada's international reputation and its history of peacekeeping:

Peacekeeping is an important aspect of Canada's national heritage and a reflection of our fundamental beliefs... Canada builds on our established peacekeeping tradition to make strong and imaginative contributions to international peace and security... Peacekeeping is also a significant component of Canada's foreign policy and our contribution to the multilateral security system ("Canada and Peace" 2002).

The Silver Cross mother provides a connection between these two positive images Canadians have of themselves as actors on the international stage. In both cases the image of the mothers acts, if not as an agent for recruitment, as during World War One, at least as a reinforcement of the values upheld by the state, as in the case of the peacekeepers. And she commands respect in her role now as in the past. If a Silver Cross mother of a peacekeeper can support the sacrifice of her son or daughter then how could anyone question her or the government that attempts to foster peace in whose name her child died?

When we now see the Silver Cross mother laying a wreath on the War Memorial she points back to all Silver Cross mothers and asks us to remember them. This remembrance comes from the position of a relatively peaceful nation and of a mother who has sacrificed her son to peace. The image, cloaked in peace, helps to foster the remembrance of the wars in which Canada has been involved as honourable and necessary actions aimed at peace. Like the mothers of ancient Greece whose mourning was controlled, the poignant image of the Silver Cross mother seems to remind us, selectively, of our past. For the sake of peace, attained through amnesty, her image, quietly supportive of the state, encourages us to forget the side of war which incites revenge. The atrocity stories of the

Bryce Report are now only remembered by military historians and Mount Cavell is significant only in its scenic beauty.

During World War One the stories in Canada of proud, bereaved mothers were inextricably tied to an understanding of a war steeped in notions of Christian sacrifice and divine purpose. Surrounded with this world view some of the 58,500 women who were awarded the Memorial Cross of World War One presented their loss as a gain on the side of truth and ultimate divine justice. One can cite Mrs. Hughes whose story was presented in Chapter Three. Some, like those who responded to the letter of the “Little Mother”, even said if they had had more sons to give, they would have. But many women gave to the war effort in other ways. These activities reflected on all women collectively. It was on the basis of what they gave as proud mothers of sacrificed sons and hard-working women in such places as hospitals, munitions factories, and on farms that women felt they had the right to ask for political equality. Unlike the demanding voice of women in the Greek chorus, they did this outside the theatrical realm of fiction. Unlike mothers of martyrs, enough women in Canada looked to the balance of justice and tied their sacrifices to demands. As even the fairly conservative L. M. Montgomery stated, women “should have some voice in the political issues that may send [their] sons to die on battlefields” (Murphy et al. 1915:7). Women did achieve some acceptance in the public and political sphere of the country. The federal vote was granted to women in 1917 – as long as they were related to men in the forces. The vote was thus tied more to their blood, than their actions. This made it easier at the end of the war for the veterans to demand that women return to the home and give the jobs to the veterans (Thomson 1995:11).

This has been a very common and much commented upon scenario for women involved in revolutions and wars around the world. One of the most straightforward and unabashed responses on behalf of male fighters towards female revolutionaries was made at the end of the Algerian struggle for independence from France (1954-62). The imprisoned female resistance fighter, Djamila Boupacha, who had been raped and tortured by the French for her role in the war, asked the revolutionary leader Mohammad Khider about the future of women after the revolution, “And how about us women? Our status must change now that --’ Khider interrupted the young woman, ‘Women after independence? Why, you will return to your couscous, of course’” (quoted in Minai 1981:76).

iv. Conclusion: Consolations

The Silver Cross mothers were encouraged to return home with the medal they received in recognition of their loss. It would seem to be a paltry payment but it comes with its own story of consolation. In its shape it is tied to the concept of sacrifice at the heart of the Christian faith. In this connection death becomes worth something, a means to a better world both for the people left living as well as for the son who will go to heaven for what he has done. Pericles said in his funeral oration that he did not intend for his words to give consolation but rather comfort to the bereaved parents. Their comfort was to rest on pride – a pride in what their sons had died for. Although Pericles does not call his words “consolation,” he, like the authors of Islamic, Jewish, and Christian consolation

literature,²⁰⁵ recognized the need for practical aids to help parents overcome their intense pain over the loss of a child and counselled calm acceptance without excessive emotion.

This is, in essence, the position of the Silver Cross mother. She is not an hysterical, wailing, hair-rending presence, but is stoical in her grief, a pillar of dignity, honouring her dead child and sanctifying the struggle, by ensuring that we remember -- but not too much.

This chapter has examined the policies of the Imperial War Graves Commission in their dealings with the one million soldiers of the British Empire killed in World War One and how they affected the mourners. A number of the decisions the IWGC made on how to commemorate the dead had parallels in ancient Greece. Although the dominant religious tradition of Christianity is evident in the design of the graveyards, the Commission tried to balance a representation and respect for a variety of religious traditions with a sense of uniformity.

An object of concern in both ancient Greece and in World War One, although to a far greater extent in the latter, was the missing bodies of the soldiers. Thucydides tells us that the Athenians built a symbolic bier for the missing, while in the Great War monuments to the missing were built, and in both cases cenotaphs were erected to remind the mourners of those who were buried elsewhere. As a special mark of their bravery, the heroes of

²⁰⁵ The history of consolation writings goes back to ancient times in the Mediterranean world. The Roman and Greek writers Seneca, Lucretius and Plutarch patterned their consolation writings after Crantor but the tradition extended to Homeric times and through the tragedies and public funeral ceremonies of Athens (De Lacy and Einarson 1949 Vol 7:577). The call for patience when facing death is found in the Muslim literary genre of comfort stories designed for consolation, dating back to the Middle Ages. Within this group of writings existed a sub-genre of comforting tales dealing specifically with bereaved parents (Gil'adi, 1993:367). The Islamic comfort books were so popular they "entered Jewish literature via Judeo-Arabic, either in the form of themes and genres or – by way of translation – whole works" (Brinner, 1977:xvii). There are a number of medieval Christian writers who referred to the death of a child as a divine mercy. In doing so they rebuke the parents for excessive weeping, but at the same time they console them with the assurances of a life in Paradise for their child. In her book, *Childhood in the Middle Ages*, Shulamith Shahar mentions Jean Gerson, Humbert de Romans, John Wyclif and Thomas Cantimpratanus as examples of those who condemned bereaved parents for their show of grief as it indicated a rebellion against God's will (1990:151-2).

Marathon were buried where they fell, a principal of honour which the IWGC tried to uphold in the design of its graveyards. And as in ancient Greece, those who mourned the dead soldiers, predominantly women, had their bereavement circumscribed. The ideals of democracy and equality extended towards the soldiers in their memory were not forwarded to female mourners to allow them a voice in creating the policies of the IWGC and the design for how the war would be remembered.

Conclusion: Mothers and Memories

War and religion have been constant companions for millennia. They support each other, providing proof of the other's validity and poignant stories to ensure their place in memory. This dissertation has examined one aspect of their relationship through the stories of the mothers of sacrificed heroes. Chapter One presented a variety of mothers' stories and the different ways the mothers were said to have supported their children's martyrdom, including the joyful mother of the Maccabees, the mothers of sorrow, Mary and Fatima, the poet Al-Khansa and the grandmother, Mata Gujari. Whether with joy or sorrow, all the mothers are portrayed as accepting the necessity of the sacrifice of their children.

The ancient tales of child sacrifice have been retold and reinvented according to the needs and the culture of the time and situation. The historical theorists of ancient times recognized the motivational force which could be had by authors who appealed to their readers' emotions. Martyrologists from different religious traditions have made this appeal in similar ways. The stories presented in Chapter One all rely on the assumption of an intense bond between mother and child which the mother will sever for her faith and community when put to the test. This act is taken as proof of the ultimate truth of the cause for which she offers the life of her children.

Although now mainly forgotten, these powerful types of stories were reproduced in English culture in Canada during World War One. The examples discussed in Chapter Two of the language of sacrifice found in the art, newspapers, magazines and sermons during the war were rejected afterwards as propaganda and, as Bertrand Russell said, the "foul language of glory". Yet, during the war many people were moved in thought and deed by this language. Soldiers were described in sacrificial tones, sometimes specifically as Christ,

or more generally, as martyrs. In this chapter the atrocity stories of the *Bryce Report* were compared to the tortures found in martyrologies, both of which were designed to show the evil nature of the enemy. The tales of the martyrdom of Edith Cavell and the rumours of the Crucified Canadian had an impact on recruitment and morale. Both were martyrs in the popular imagination, and the causes for which they suffered, as in the previous martyrologies, reached to the ultimate of truth, justice, civilization and god. And although soldiers were trained, more or less, to kill, they were depicted as peace-loving defenders of truth, much like the martyrs whose mothers' stories were told in Chapter One.

Chapter Three examined tales of Canadian World War One mothers. The social context for the words of the Canadian mothers was discussed through an analysis of the images of mothers and women in general, supporting the war effort as depicted on posters, in advertisements and in campaigns, such as the White Feather Campaign. This context made the Letter from a Little Mother and Mrs. Hughes' happy Christmas telegram as well as all the references to the Spartan Mother appear less "over the top" and believable as a voice emanating out of the times. The recruitment activities of the White Feather Campaign women are comparable to those of the mothers of martyrs and heroes. They were not the voices of the now much more broadly appealing pacifist women of the time, who were recovered and saluted in the post-war era. But for the women who did present views supportive of the war – however deep their beliefs were – there were forms of compensation similar to what Palestinian and Iranian women received in more recent times, ranging from financial support and formal respect in the shape of the Silver Cross to enfranchisement.

After the war the mothers of the soldiers continued to have a role in its commemoration. They were once again depicted in artwork, for example on the Vimy Memorial and the Peace Tower's Memorial Chamber, as sad but proudly supportive of the state in its choice of participating in the war. The role of the bereaved mothers was highlighted in another dramatic fashion in 1936 on the Vimy Pilgrimage when Silver Cross mother Mrs. Wood was chosen to lay the wreath in Westminster Abby and was introduced to the King.

During World War Two the image of the heroic Silver Cross mother was once again called up to support the value of sacrifice. Since 1939 the Canadian Legion has chosen one Silver Cross mother to lay a wreath on the War Memorial in Ottawa on behalf of all war-bereaved mothers of Canada. This ritual is televised on CBC and in recent years the Silver Cross mother has been highlighted through an interview prior to the Remembrance Day ceremonies in part taking place in the Memorial Chamber amidst the Books of Remembrance. The Silver Cross mothers, now mothers of peacekeepers, represent to Canadians a positive image of their country's actions on the international stage. Through the rituals of Remembrance Day they remind us of the sacrifice of the mothers from previous wars, but particularly World War One, which is now, in popular Canadian history, taken to be a significant rite of passage for the nation and Canada's step onto the international stage.

The final chapter examined the huge task of burying the dead which was taken on by the Imperial War Graves Commission (IWGC). In devising their principles, the Commission decided not to include any women, those who are traditionally considered responsible for mourning. In excluding women from the Commission the members of the

IWGC effectively took control of the mourning process. In many ways they were following the precedent established by the ancient Greeks for burying their war heroes. As Nicole Loraux argued, the voices of the mourning women in Athens and other city-states were also controlled for fear of the emotions they would raise. The IWGC made a great and creative effort to commemorate the one million dead in a manner that reflected what they saw as the international nature of the war and the British Imperial Empire, as well as the unity of purpose for which the war was fought.

The image of the Silver Cross mothers and that of the Vimy Ridge “Spirit of Canada” balance our needs and desires to both remember and forget. The most often repeated reason given for the need to remember the sacrifice she signifies is so we will learn not to repeat our mistakes. Although it is difficult to give credence to this notion considering the wars which have occurred subsequent to World War One, during the inter-war years and still on Remembrance Day, it is a hope commonly voiced. In addition, by remembering those fallen soldiers and their mourning mothers, we give their death and pain a purpose and a place in history.

As one would expect from a more militaristic culture, the Americans have taken the remembrance of their war-bereaved mothers a step further. Since 1936, on the last Sunday of September, Gold Star Mother’s Day, the president is required to issue a proclamation to the people that they display their flags and hold meetings in their homes, public places or places of worship so that they might express their respect for the Gold Star mothers. When the need for a strong sense of patriotism and support for the military was required in the lead-up to the Gulf War in 1990, George Bush Sr. reminded the American public of the

sacrifice of Mrs. Bixby in his Gold Star Mother's Day proclamation (Bush envirotex.eh.doe.gov/data/eos/bush/19900926.html. Accessed 8/6/02).

In the context of the Middle Eastern conflict, Palestinian mothers of martyrs are also having their place in history asserted particularly by radical leaders, in an increasingly dramatized and unforgettable manner. In June 2002 a low-budget video caught the attention of the world press. The story line was reminiscent of the film *Some Mother's Son*, discussed in the introduction, but in this case the actors, Naima al-Abed and her son, Mahmoud, played themselves. Naima, like the Irish mother who chose to maintain her unconscious son's hunger strike until his death, also chose to support her son's death in upholding a cause. In this video, designed and distributed by Hamas, Naima al-Abed makes clear her belief in the close and winning relationship between martyrdom and the land. She says to her son, "I am not losing you, because you are going to paradise... Our sons whom we love are no more dear to us than our land. Their blood will redeem it."²⁰⁶ Through the influence of video and newsprint, the story of Naima and her desire for redemption has been recorded and, her supporters hope, will live on in the minds of others long enough to inspire them to follow in her and her son's steps.

The fear in remembering is that the memory will constantly rekindle the desire for revenge. The atrocities of war must be forgotten because peace cannot be built on the memory of hatred. What helped us to forget the atrocities which took us to war in the First World War, was the post-war knowledge that many of them, said to have been committed by the enemy, never occurred. With this knowledge came a realization that the atrocity was the war itself and how it was conducted. Mrs. Wood, the most notable Silver Cross Mother

of the war, voiced the agony of this understanding. Upon meeting King Edward VIII while on the Vimy pilgrimage in 1936 she said, "Oh! Sir, I have just been looking at the trenches and I just can't figure out why our boys had to go through that" (Halton 1936:1). It is likely that George Bernard Shaw would have added Mrs. Wood's name to those of Edith Cavell and Joan of Arc on his list of arch-heretics had she made this statement during the war. But the King responded with a gracious, although, it would turn out, empty hope. "Please God, Mrs. Wood, it shall never happen again." Charlotte Wood died a month after the beginning of World War Two. And now, this first Silver Cross Mother is buried in an unmarked grave in Lot 113, Section 52, Brookside Cemetery, Winnipeg. Mrs. Wood, famous in her time for the sacrifice she made for her country which was mirrored in the monuments of her day, is now all but forgotten in this country of relative peace.

Will the stories of her sacrifice be resurrected and polished up in some future time of national crisis? The scenario is not implausible. Societies under attack band together and use whatever weapons are available, be they the latest military hardware or suicide bombers. Certainly propaganda and national mythmaking are crucial parts of the mix. Yet in an era when Irish blood is still brought to a boil over the outcome of the Battle of the Boyne, and bombs still rock the streets of old Jerusalem in a conflict centuries in the making, it is hard not to take some strange comfort in the present peaceful obscurity of a figure like Mrs. Wood. If history is a struggle between remembering and forgetting, then what is remembered is a battleground in itself, and forgetting is sometimes the sanest relief.

²⁰⁶ Her words were quoted in an article by Alan Philps written for *The Daily Telegraph* and reprinted in the *Ottawa Citizen* 17 June 2002:5.

Appendix: Illustrations

- Plate 1.** Illustration of Sikh mothers with their infants' bodies hanging around their necks by Devinder Singh in *Illustrated Martyrdom Tradition* (Singh, Satbir. 1983).
- Plate 2.** Derwent Wood, *Canada's Golgotha* 1919 (AN19710261-0797).
- Plate 3.** Louis Raemaekers, *Europe, 1916* (*Raemaekers Cartoons*, 1971:33).
- Plate 4.** Charles Sims, *Sacrifice* 1918 (AN19710262-0662).
- Plate 5.** Louis Raemaekers, *Easter 1915* (*Raemaekers Cartoons*, 1971:251).
- Plate 6.** Louis Raemaekers, *Thrown to the Swine: The Martyred Nurse* (*Raemaekers Cartoons*, 1915:25).
- Plate 7.** Louis Raemaekers, *Massacre of the Innocents. Herod: "Are they crying 'mother' – or 'murder'?"* (*Raemaekers Cartoons*, 1915: 29)
- Plate 8.** Bernard Partridge, *God (and the women) Our Shield* (*Punch*, 1919:7). Reproduced with Permission of Punch Ltd.
- Plate 9.** Louis Raemaekers, *The Very Stones Cry Out* (*Raemaekers Cartoons* 1915:21).
- Plate 10.** Mrs. Charlotte Susan Wood, Vimy Pilgrimage, 1936. Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau National Film Board of Canada, Phototheque (NAC PA-148875).
- Plate 11.** They Know the Meaning of Sacrifice: Nine Canadian Mothers Who Have Sent Forty-Seven Sons to Fight (*Everywoman's World*, top section of the page, August 1917:5).
- Plate 12.** Käthe Kollwitz *The Mourning Parents* (1932) Vladslo Cemetery, Belgium.
- Plate 13.** Walter Allward *Spirit of Canada* Vimy Ridge Memorial, Vimy Ridge, France.
- Plate 14.** À Nos Morts – Picardie Maudissant La Guerre (War memorial, Péronne, France).



Plate 1. Illustration of Sikh mothers with their infants' bodies hanging around their necks by Devinder Singh (*Illustrated Martyrdom Tradition*, 1983).



Plate 2. Derwent Wood, *Canada's Golgotha* 1919 (AN19710261-0797).



EUROPE, 1916

"Am I not yet sufficiently civilized?"

Plate 3. Louis Raemaekers, *Europe, 1916* (*Raemaekers Cartoons*, 1971:33).

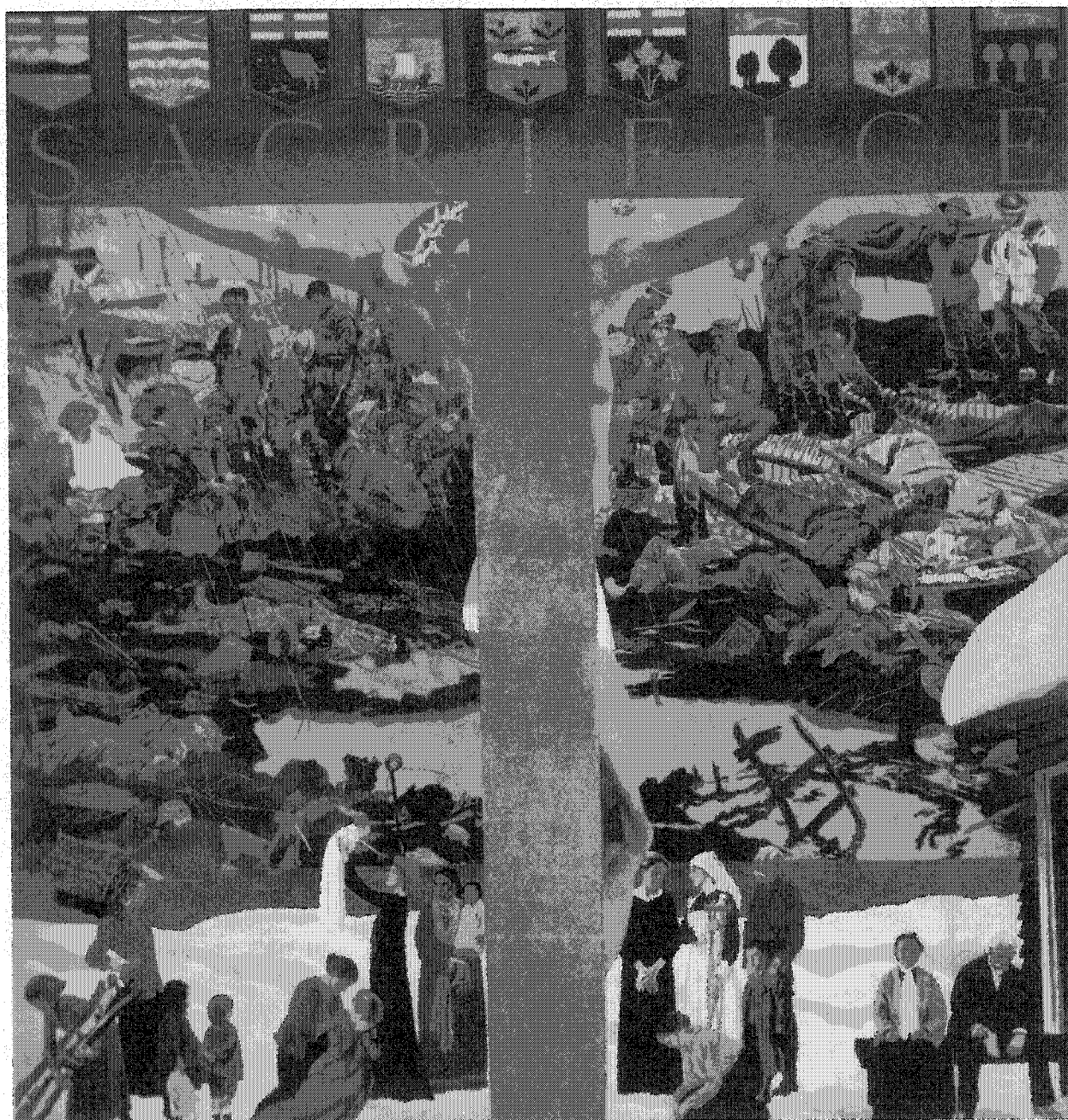
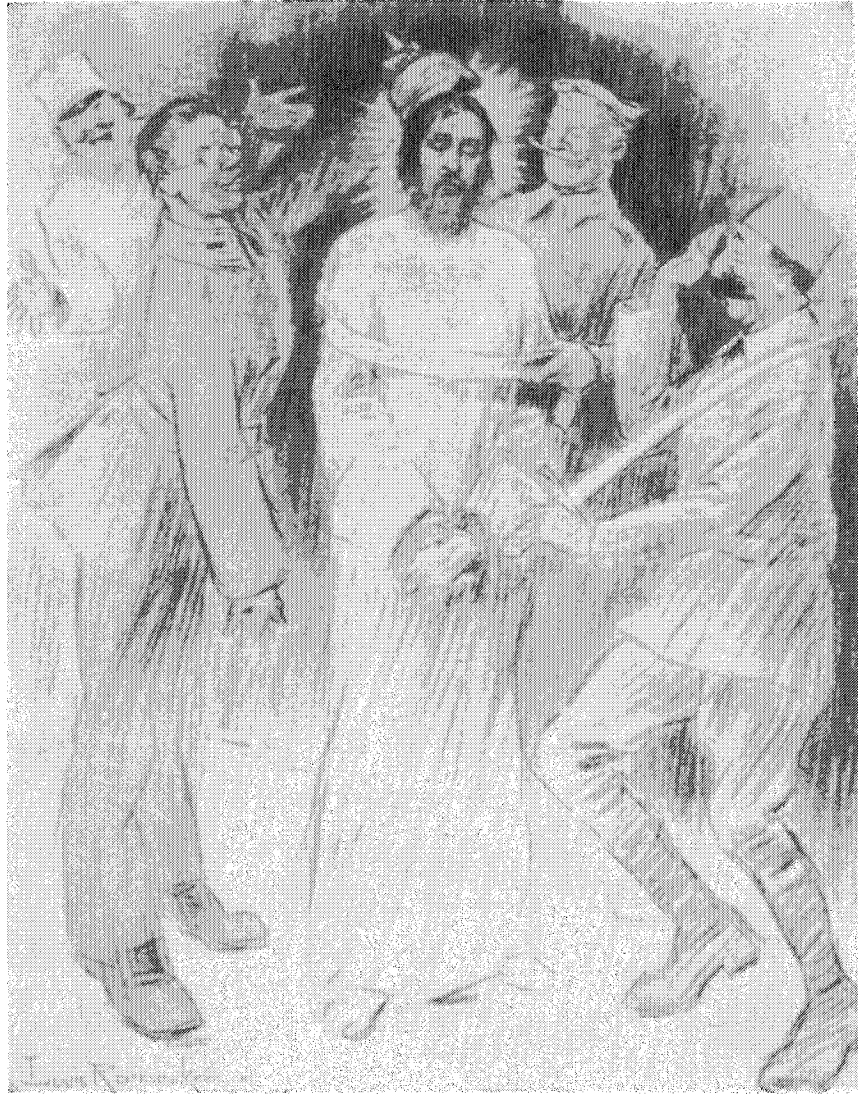


Plate 4. Charles Sims, *Sacrifice* 1918 (AN19710262-0662).



EASTER, 1915

"And they bowed the knee before Him."

Plate 5. Louis Raemaekers, *Easter 1915* (*Raemaekers Cartoons*, 1971:251).



THROWN TO THE SWINE

The Martyred Nurse.

Plate 6. Louis Raemaekers, *Thrown to the Swine: The Martyred Nurse* (Raemaekers Cartoons, 1915:25).



Plate 7. Louis Raemaekers, *Massacre of the Innocents*. Herod: "Are they crying 'mother' – or 'murder'?" (*Raemaekers Cartoons*, 1915: 29)



GOD (AND THE WOMEN) OUR SHIELD
Study of a German Gentleman going into Action

Plate 8. Bernard Partridge, *God (and the women) Our Shield* (*Punch*, 1919:7).
Reproduced with permission of Punch Ltd.



THE VERY STONES CRY OUT

Plate 9. Louis Raemaekers, *The Very Stones Cry Out* (*Raemaekers Cartoons* 1915:21).



Plate 10. Mrs. Charlotte Susan Wood, Vimy Pilgrimage, 1936. Canadian Government Motion Picture Bureau National Film Board of Canada, Phototheque (NAC PA-148875).

THEY KNOW THE MEANING OF SACRIFICE

Nine Canadian Mothers Who Have Sent Forty-Seven Sons to Fight



Husband Greatest Recruiter
MRS. GORDON WRIGHT, London, Ont., President Dominion W.C.T.U., Vice-President London Red Cross, has sent three sons: Major Wright; Corporal Wright; Captain Wright, who is the youngest division Quartermaster in the Service. Her husband, Chief Recruiting Officer, R.N.C.V.R., has secured more recruits than any man in Canada.



Seven Sons for King and Country
MRS. SCOTTIE, Ross, Ont., has given seven sons: Robert J. B. Scottie, Lieutenant; E. M. Scottie, Corporal; Harry Scottie, Lieutenant; A. A. Scottie, Private; Russell Scottie, Corporal; Robert Scottie, and Dr. T. J. Scottie. One son remains at home as he is too young.



The Fighting Spirit Lives
MRS. LORNE MCDUGALL has four sons fighting for the Empire: Brigadier-General Allen McDougall, Canadian Remount Technician; Charles Morris McDougall, and Lieutenant Arthur McDougall. Her youngest son was in the trenches for eleven consecutive months, but was wounded quite badly and evacuated to the north of France.



A Gifted Mother Sends Three Sons
MRS. ADAM INCH, President, The Women's Institute, Nova: Hamilton, Ont., has sent three sons to the front. Mrs. Inch was pretty in demand as a platform speaker; but now work for the soldier has crowded everything else out of her life.



Six Sons Answered the Call
MRS. BELLINGS, Hamilton, Ont., has six sons in Active Service; two in France, one in England, three in training. Mrs. Bellings has one other son, a lad of fifteen, whose chief desire is that the War may be prolonged until he is of military age—he wants to strike a blow for the Empire.



Ten Men From One Family
THE Depew family is an example of Northern Ontario patriotism. Mr. Joseph Depew was wounded, but did not survive the sea voyage. Frank, Albert, James, and Joseph, Jr., have all been wounded. A husband and five sons are also in service.

Plate 11. They Know the Meaning of Sacrifice: Nine Canadian Mothers Who Have Sent Forty-Seven Sons to Fight (*Everywoman's World*, top section of the page, August 1917:5).

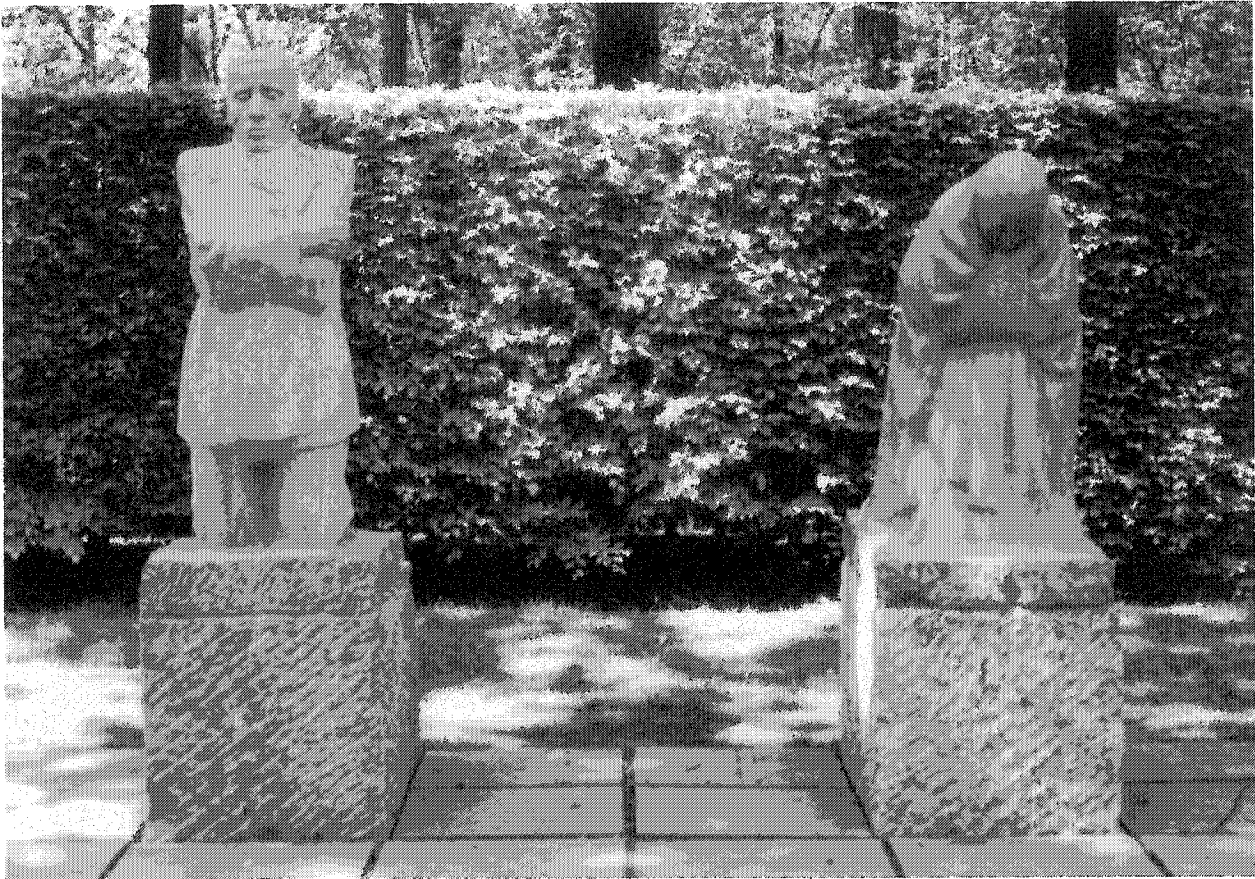


Plate 12. Käthe Kollwitz *The Mourning Parents* (1932) Vladslo Cemetery, Belgium.



Plate 13. Walter Allward *Spirit of Canada* Vimy Ridge Memorial, Vimy Ridge, France.



Plate 14. À Nos Morts – Picardie Maudissant La Guerre (War memorial, Péronne, France).

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