

**Knights of Faith:
The Soldier in Canadian War Fiction**

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ABSTRACT

The war novel is a significant genre in twentieth-century Canadian fiction. Central to that genre has been the soldier's narrative. Canadian war novelists have often situated the soldier's story in opposition to how war has functioned in Canadian cultural memory, which usually posits war as a necessary, though brutal, galvanizing force. This dissertation on how novelists depict the Canadian soldier represents a crucial opportunity to examine Canadian cultures of militarization and how Canadian identity has been formed in close identification with the mutable figure of the soldier. The most sophisticated Canadian war novels engage with how militarism functions as a grand narrative in Canadian society, while enabling Canadians to speak about issues related to war that tend to be over-simplified or elided. This dissertation examines emblematic Canadian war novels – *The Imperialist* by Sara Jeanette Duncan, *Generals Die in Bed* by Charles Yale Harrison, *Turvey* by Earle Birney, *Execution* by Colin McDougall, *The Wars* by Timothy Findley, *Broken Ground* by Jack Hodgins, *The Stone Carvers* by Jane Urquhart, etc. – in order to trace how the representation of the Canadian soldier has shifted throughout the twentieth-century. Canadian war novels are culturally cathartic exercises wherein received notions of Canadian moral and military superiority can be safely questioned. The Canadian soldier, often characterized in official discourse as the personification of duty and sacrifice, has been reimagined by war novelists throughout the twentieth century as a site of skepticism and resistance. In many Canadian war novels, the soldier affords the opportunity to claim counter-histories, reject master narratives, and posit new originary myths.

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INTRODUCTION

A Force That Gives Us Meaning: Twentieth-Century Canadian War Fiction

In a 1916 article published in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Samuel Crothers coins the term “bibliotherapy” to describe a supposedly ancient practice of prescribing particular literary works for therapeutic effect. The article, “A Literary Clinic,” describes a church basement that has been transformed into a “bibliopathic institute” by an acquaintance of the author named Bagster. Bagster explains, “Bibliotherapy is... a new science... A book may be a stimulant or a sedative or an irritant or a soporific. The point is that it must do something to you, and you ought to know what it is” (292). Typically, he counsels his patients to read more novels: “Not pleasant stories that make you forget yourself. They must be searching, drastic, stinging, relentless novels” (296). Not all novels, however, are salubrious to their readers. One particular patron of the institute has “taken an overdose of war literature,” and Crothers wonders what type of books might cure him: books that would “put new life into us and then set the life pulse strong but slow” (301).

If Canadian readers must detoxify from any particular genre in Canadian literature, it might be the war novel. David McGimpsey’s satirical poem “My Canadian Novel,” from his Governor General’s award-nominated collection *Li'l Bastard* (2011), lightheartedly skewers several clichés of the traditionally solemn and thoughtful Canadian novel. Amid images of a “Newfoundland orphanage” or a woman’s garden that is “a metaphor for love and loss” is “the story of a woman’s courage and how a war wound kept a man alive” (11). The well-worn tropes of Canadian war fiction are famous enough to be ripe for parody. Furthermore, in a review written for the *Globe and Mail*, Robert Wiersema diagnoses himself with a condition he dubs “premise fatigue”; he

cannot bear to read “another book about the Great War from a Canadian serviceman’s perspective” (D10). This malaise should not be surprising given the glut of war novels that have been published in the last twenty years: Kevin Major’s *No Man’s Land* (1995), Jane Urquhart’s *The Underpainter* (1997) and *The Stone Carvers* (2001), Jack Hodgins’s *Broken Ground* (1998), Mary Swan’s *The Deep* (2002), Frances Itani’s *Deafening* (2003), Alan Cumyn’s *The Sojourn* (2003) and *The Famished Lover* (2006), Joseph Boyden’s *Three Day Road* (2005), Michael Poole’s *Rain Before Morning* (2006), Daniel Poliquin’s *A Secret Between Us* (2007), and Allan Donaldson’s *Maclean* (2007) to name just a few. Yet, Canadian critics of war literature remain as truculent as ever.

In critical discussions of Canadian war novels, it is customary to begin by lamenting the extent to which scholars have neglected the corpus of Canadian war writing. Dagmar Novak begins her study of the Canadian war novel, *Dubious Glory: The Two World Wars and the Canadian Novel*, published in 2000, by promising to fill a crucial gap in Canadian studies: “The impact of the First World War upon Canada’s political and social institutions has been the subject of many studies. Its impact upon the country’s intellectual and cultural development, however, has been largely ignored” (1-2). Peter Webb’s dissertation, “Occupants of Memory: War in Twentieth Century Fiction,” completed in 2007 at the University of Ottawa, similarly cannot resist this rhetorical strategy: “[Canadian war novels] form a tradition of Canadian war fiction in the twentieth century, a tradition that is largely overlooked in Canadian criticism” (6). Writing as far back as 1981, Eric Thompson acknowledges, “The war novel is a significant genre of Canadian fiction,” but also bemoans that Canadian war novelists “deserve to be better known” (81).

In 2015, given the extent of renewed interest in Canada's relationship to war – the centenary of the First World War brings with it a raft of new texts both literary, such as the aforementioned novels, and critical, such as Neta Gordon's *Catching the Torch: Contemporary Canadian First World War Narratives* (2014) and Sherrill Grace's *Landscapes of War and Memory: The Two World Wars in Canadian Literature and the Arts, 1977-2007* (2014) – it is no longer credible to describe Canada's canon of war writing as wholly "neglected." If it were once convenient and convincing to argue that Canadian war novels are unfairly ignored, now it is merely convenient. Certainly, there are aspects that are overlooked, as is the case with any genre, but to appropriate W.J. Keith's assessment of Canadian literature in general, Canadian war novels have "attained a sufficient solidity and stature that we can invoke high standards without any fear that the subject might succumb to the process" (Keith 28). The challenge for the contemporary critic of Canadian war fiction is how to situate, analyze, and contextualize these texts when the battle for recognition has been won.

Reading war through the lens of literary criticism remains crucial because the cultural memory of the wars of the twentieth century is predicated as much on the literature it inspired as anything else. In this regard, literature has far outperformed history. It is likely that most young people's introduction to the First and Second World Wars is in English class rather than history class. Novels and poems serve as instructional guides for parsing how war functions in society: "Novels like Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and poems like Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum Est' prime [...] expectations about the war, its conduct, and its meaning before any more complex issues of historiography and debate can be

introduced” (Milne). This literary supremacy is interwoven into official, state-sanctioned efforts to memorialize and commemorate the dead. There are few Australians, Britons, Canadians, or New Zealanders who cannot recite at least the opening lines of John McCrae’s “In Flanders Fields.” Laurence Binyon’s “For the Fallen” is similarly ubiquitous at memorial services. Historians have long quibbled with the assertion, made by some veteran authors, that novels written by those who had served constituted the “truth about war”; nevertheless, literature’s primacy in mainstream culture necessitates that no discussion of war is complete without its patriotic romances, traumatized poets, Marxist radicals, existential searchers, and so on.

This dissertation, then, situates an important literary movement in its intellectual and historical context – not merely to provide new readings of worthy texts but to ask pertinent questions about the contemporary Canadian relationship to the moral implications of war. A nuanced dissertation on how war novelists represent the Canadian soldier is an especially important opportunity to examine Canadian cultures of militarization past and present. The most sophisticated Canadian war novels engage with the myriad of ways militarism functions as a grand narrative in Canadian society, and the soldier’s narrative enables Canadians to speak about issues related to war that are often elided. Canadian war novels are culturally cathartic exercises wherein received notions of Canadian moral and military superiority can be safely questioned. The Canadian soldier, often characterized in official discourse as the personification of duty and sacrifice, has been reimagined throughout the twentieth century as a site of skepticism and resistance. In many Canadian war novels, the soldier affords the opportunity to claim counter-histories, reject master narratives, and find new originary myths.

Central to the controversy over who has the authority to speak about war is the epistemological gulf between war insider and war outsider – soldier and witness. The schism between soldier and witness is explored in many war novels, no matter the decade. Novels written by veterans rely on realism as a means to “set the record straight” about the war and disrupt the fantasies of glory perpetuated by some of the most egregiously credulous war Romances. In these realist novels, there is a persistent schism between the front and the home front. Modern novels, like *Broken Ground* or *The Stone Carvers*, evince serious qualms about representing the traumatic experience of another. This dissertation strives to broaden the definition of who can be considered a soldier in Canadian war novels. Merely restricting the definition to those in uniform is woefully insufficient. There is a specific generic pattern to how soldiers tend to be represented, and a uniformed serviceman does not always enact this pattern. Eric Thompson delineates the most obvious generic tropes associated with the soldier figure:

In Canadian war novels, the initial naïveté of the citizen soldier, the shock of combat on foreign soil, and the manner in which the soldier learns to cope with his personal conflicts and dilemmas, are the areas of concern for the writer. And, just as in actuality the War proved to be the remorseless enemy of human hopes — precisely because it was the product of human hatred — so in fiction it came to represent the great antagonist which the soldier protagonist had to confront, and seek to conquer. (95)

This pattern is apparent in several Canadian novels that do not feature a literal soldier. A.M. Klein’s *The Second Scroll* (1951), for instance, faithfully replicates the narrative Thompson describes. In Sara Jeannette Duncan’s *The Imperialist* (1904), several

characters literally play-act as soldiers. Rilla, the protagonist of Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921), is the centre of a bildungsroman so similar to that of the typical soldier's narrative that the novel's adherence to generic expectations must be deliberate. Canadian war novels published at the end of the twentieth century are often mediated through war outsiders, but accord with the generic expectations of the soldier in a war novel. These novels, therefore, can productively be read as soldiers' narratives.

Webb's 2007 dissertation establishes the Canadian war novel as a distinct genre in which each novel influences, reflects, and counters the other throughout the twentieth century. To achieve this cohesion, Webb juxtaposes such well-known authors as Ralph Connor, L.M. Montgomery, and Hugh MacLennan with such lesser-known war novelists as Charles Yale Harrison, William Allister, and Colin McDougall, in order to point out the ways in which these authors, however different, speak to one another. Genres, however, have a tendency to constrain and inhibit criticism: "genres are agents of ideological closure - they limit the meaning-potential of a given text" (Hartley 128). Critics of genre fiction must recognize that genre is nothing more than a "system of generic expectations [that] amount to a code, by the use of which (or by departure from which) composition becomes more economical" (Fowler 215). Therefore, there is room for authors to work in creative tension with generic expectations. One of the primary ways Canadian war novelists achieve that tension is by expanding the criteria by which the soldier is defined.

As the most recent war book boom coincides with the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, it is crucial to examine the Canadian impulse to remember and

memorialize the two World Wars and, in particular, the figure of the Canadian soldier. Even today, writers are reticent to critique the First World War, and especially the Battle of Vimy Ridge, as Canada's founding myth. In *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, Jeffrey A. Keshen notes, "There . . . persists the picture of soldiers who, through their extraordinary bravery, won the hardest and most important battles—particularly Second Ypres and Vimy Ridge—and thus emerged a singular and heroic force in transforming Canada from colony to nation" (xvii). In *Death so Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, Jonathan F. Vance confirms that the representation of the First World War "as a nation-building experience of signal importance" has been propagated since "the earliest days of war." He writes, "Canada's progress from colony to nation by way of Flanders, an interpretation born in the early days of war, has become the standard method of judging the impact of 1914-1918" (10).

Many recent novels, such as *The Stone Carvers*, strive not to debunk the questionable claim that the First World War was the crucible through which Canada became a nation but rather to incorporate previously marginalized groups, like women and immigrants, into that myth. The calamitous events of the first half of the twentieth century remain as crucial as ever to the maintenance of a cohesive national identity. As Nancy Holmes points out:

Few countries in the world have a poem printed on their currency, but Canada does. True, the font is so small you need a magnifying glass to read it, but the poem is there on the new ten dollar bill, written in both English and French — it is the first verse of John McCrae's "In Flanders Fields," a poem that each

November is recited in school gymnasiums and around war memorials in Canada and throughout many other English-speaking countries. (11)

Although this design was replaced in 2013 by another example of Canadian cohesion, the Canadian passenger train, replacing Bill Reid's *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii* with Walter Allward's Vimy Ridge Memorial on the twenty-dollar bill, preserved the cultural precedence of the First World War.

The narrative of the First World War for Canada has always been consciously fashioned as one of national growth and development. Canadian war novels constitute varied responses to how Canadians have traditionally made meaning and defined themselves through war. By subjecting these novels, and their representation of the Canadian soldier, to scrupulous analysis, the critic can also analyze “the motives of the state that has issued the ten dollar bill, the poppy quarter, the veterans’ licence plates... [and] ask if these tokens of remembrance are not deliberate strategies on the part of the federal government and militaristic segments of our society to re-instill simplistic devotion to nationalism at the expense of our more difficult humanitarian values and moral concerns” (Holmes 31).

The image of Canada as a “Peaceable Kingdom” with a five-thousand-mile undefended border endures in spite of the ways in which writers have questioned that myth throughout the twentieth century. In *Bearing Witness: Perspectives on War and Peace from the Arts and Humanities* (2012), edited by Sherrill Grace, Aritha van Herk argues that Canada “has hosted only a few skirmishes and suffered no occupation or widespread destruction” (xiii) and that Canada is a “peaceful and never-occupied country” (xvii). Noah Richler makes a similar argument: “the significance of Canadian

troops never having fought... to defend the country's post-colonial boundaries on home soil is easily underestimated. Battle has been, to Canadians, that real but ever distant phenomenon" (27). Richler and van Herk's spurious claims prompt an obvious question: whose Canada are they describing? They are certainly not describing the experience of Canada's indigenous population or Acadians or Chinese migrant workers or interned Japanese-Canadians. Canada's fantasy of itself as a nation of peace belies the cultures of militarization at the centre of its identity.

It is also important to question the received narrative of Canadian war writing and the ways in which it too is potentially complicit with the myth-making and erasures inherent to how war in Canada is conceived and explained. In *Dubious Glory*, for instance, Novak identifies three distinct phases of Canadian war writing: the romance tradition, realism, and irony. Although Novak's study is largely bibliographical in nature and relies heavily on plot summary, its narrative framework has proved to be an enduring contribution to war criticism. Nearly every post-*Dubious Glory* critic who writes about Canadian war novels acknowledges its utility for conceiving of war writing as a coherent genre.

While Novak's schema has proved useful, it is anachronistic and non-comprehensive. Her distinction between Romance and realism is too neatly delineated to account for such a discursive literary movement. It is easy to excoriate the intransigently patriotic Romances of Ralph Connor, but not every novel written before Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* (1929) can so easily be dismissed as Romance. Montgomery's *Rilla of Ingleside* or Bertrand Sinclair's *The Inverted Pyramid* (1924), for

example, are two novels where genres collide and comeingle, creating complex generic and thematic tensions that are rarely acknowledged.

Although Novak ends her study with Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (1977), the most widely read Canadian war novel, in the nearly forty years since its publication, the influence of the novel on Canadian war writing needs to be reevaluated. For Novak, Findley's "parody of the early romance war novels brings the Canadian war novel full circle, from romance to irony" (4). The war novels published after *The Wars* certainly owe a major debt to Findley's innovations; it is a novel which so thoroughly set the tone for Canadian war literature that every subsequent attempt to grapple with what war means to Canada can be read as a reaction to this novel. It is not clear, however, whether an era of irony and postmodern distance was ushered in at Findley's behest. In fact, the novels of Cumyn, Hodgins, and Urquhart return to a level of sincerity not seen in war writing since the 1920s. There is significant textual evidence that these contemporary writers are skeptical of Findley's endlessly recursive postmodern strategy. The genre was hardly brought "full circle."

Ultimately, Novak's three-wave solution to the question of the Canadian war novel serves a comforting critical imaginary. Each wave "improves" upon the last resulting in a more nuanced and sophisticated portrayal of war's impact on Canadian society. Novak fails to acknowledge that each of these supposed phases inevitably happens in tandem with broader upheavals in Canadian culture. Each generation gets the war literature that it needs. This developmental mode of understanding Canadian war writing entwines the First and Second World Wars, and Canada's literary representation of them, with the values of the Enlightenment project supposedly laid to waste by the

First World War. Novak's schema is a whiggish narrative of inevitable progress: Canadian war novels start out as juvenile Romantic fantasies before seeing the error of their ways and adopting realism to render themselves worthy of the dead. Ultimately, this realism proves problematic as well, and the Canadian war novel reaches its apotheosis with Findley's *The Wars* and its postmodern pastiche. It is no surprise that Novak ends her study with Findley's novel because, according to her framework, there is nowhere left to go.

As a result of this adherence to a narrative of progress, many novels are given short shrift or erased entirely because they fail to cohere to a narrative of supposed evolution and epiphany. Satires like *Turvey* (1949) by Earle Birney, pacifist novels like *Aleta Dey* (1919) by Francis Marion Beynon, or any novel set on the home front not called *Barometer Rising* (1941) are only briefly mentioned in *Dubious Glory*. As Evelyn Cobley writes in her analysis of the ideological underpinnings of war literature, *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives* (1993), "The Enlightenment project of infinite social progress through rational organization has increasingly shown itself to have fallen short of its promises... the horrors of this war graphically illustrated that the Enlightenment project had lost currency" (4). Yet, the appeal of Enlightenment values endures, and the impulse to graft narratives of infinite advancement remains difficult to resist. By conceiving of war novels in this manner, Canadian critics have been ideologically complicit with the values that cause and sustain war. War, despite its unspeakable violence, can be justified if this train of thought is brought to its logical conclusion because it serves as the impetus for evolution and self-

actualization. Or, as the Danish author Karen Blixen puts it, “all sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them” (qtd. in *The Human Condition* 175).

Although other contributions to the field, like the 179th volume of *Canadian Literature*, have proved invaluable, the contents of this issue, titled “Literature and War,” are largely pragmatic and historical in nature. This dissertation would prefer to emulate recent work by Joel Baetz on Canadian war poetry and Neta Gordon on contemporary Canadian war texts. As a critic and anthologist, Baetz is able to eschew the trappings of memorialisation and history in favour of a more literary perspective that approaches war poetry with an emphasis on individual trauma. Gordon’s *Catching the Torch* offers a nuanced and sophisticated examination of First World War novels written after the publication of *The Wars*. Underlying Gordon’s study is Canada’s unspoken cultural agreement about the First World War: “war in general is condemned even while Canadian participation in *this* war is commended” (6). Canadian war novels tend to confirm Chris Hedges’s view that “the enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living” (3).

This seemingly irreconcilable contradiction reveals a tension central to Canada’s relationship to war: “Canada is a nation with a rich and varied military cast to its history, but also a nation which is nevertheless eager to avoid any suggestion of militarism” (Milne). In the novels Gordon studies, the war is figured as a futile waste of human life, in accordance with mainstream British cultural memory, but at the same time, offers the Canadian soldier the opportunity to be heroic and help forge a nation. Unfortunately, Gordon’s useful framework is limited by time period and content. A survey, like this

dissertation, of Canadian writing throughout the twentieth century, accounting for the literature of both World Wars does significant work in demonstrating how writers have wrestled with war's meaning in a Canadian context.

This dissertation, therefore, proposes a radical corrective to Novak's narrative. Twentieth-century Canadian war novels begin as divergent representations of militarism's yoke on Canadian society. Richler dubiously claims,

Perhaps it is a consequence of Canadian's having fought other people's wars for so long, of being in their essence volunteers, that outside of Timothy Findley's *The Wars* (1977) and the American-born Charles Yale Harrison's short novel *Generals Die in Bed* (1930), that not comparable objector and little such anger exists in our canon of war literature. (25)

Authors as dissimilar as Montgomery and Harrison, however, grapple with how cultures of militarization impinge upon Canadian life. Novels of the Second World War shift the focus from the political to the personal. These novels, like *Turvey* or Colin McDougall's *Execution* (1958), are existential meditations on individual responsibility best read in tandem with the major texts of that discursive philosophical school. As historiography begins to trump memory in the late 1970s, Canadian authors once again shift their attention to the First World War in order to question its position as Canada's originary myth. These novels are less concerned with historical verisimilitude than with representing a version of the war that can be applied to contemporary Canada. *The Wars*, *Broken Ground*, and *The Stone Carvers* are all examinations of Canadian attempts to remember and memorialize war's casualties as well as to redress past marginalization. Canadian war literature does not follow a straight line and its progression is not linear.

The most useful way of understanding its major themes is as examinations of militarism, then existentialism, and then memory/memorialisation.

The novels written during or immediately after the First World War, whether patriotic Romances or Marxist anti-war screeds, do not constitute a shift from Romance to realism, but rather disparate representations of cultures of militarization within Canadian society. These novels identify militarism as a Canadian metanarrative, which is an assessment that becomes anathema when Peacekeeping emerges as a more palatable signifier of Canadian identity. This theme can be seen as early as the nineteenth-century in novels such as John Richardson's *The Canadian Brothers; or, The Prophecy Fulfilled* (1840) or Sir Gilbert Parker's *The Seats of the Mighty* (1896), and it is particularly evident in Duncan's *The Imperialist*, where the ritualized militarization of small-town Canadian life is enacted in the town of Elgin. These novels disrupt the prevalent critical notion, promoted in the 1960s for cultural and political expediency, that Canada is a country mercifully spared grand narratives. While this may have been a "strategy for survival" (Kroetsch 23), this utopian vision of Canada as a literal no-place ignores Canadian war novels that do not fit into this paradigm. Novels from this period reveal militarism to be inseparable from Canadian culture, whether in Elgin, Ingleside, or the trenches.

Chapter One of this dissertation, "From Crusaders to Cannon Fodder: Cultures of Militarization in Canadian War Novels, 1900-1930," analyzes key texts from the early twentieth century, the war era, and the interwar period to determine how the First World War confirmed or contested Canadian ideas about the eminence of military culture and martial language. These novels are all emblematic of different ways of conceiving of

military authority. *The Imperialist* depicts how militarism can insinuate itself into a seemingly peaceful society, remaining dormant until need be. The novels of Ralph Connor embrace militarism wholeheartedly by conflating it with race, religion, and masculinity. *Rilla of Ingleside* levels a measured critique of militarism's effect on the home front and the women left behind, but ultimately cannot resist the comforts of Romance.

The second section of Chapter One focuses on Canada's prototypical anti-war novel: Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed*. While most critics focus on the novel's Marxism or biting cynicism, this section is primarily concerned with how the novel represents wartime ethics as a means of escaping the culture of death promoted by militaristic ideology. In the face of impersonal and dehumanizing militarism, Harrison embeds a plea for making ethical choices under constraint and allows the soldier opportunities for limited rebellion. Canada's participation in the First World War is not just the place where Canadians won glory but also where they committed atrocities and died violently. Harrison, therefore, elides Vimy Ridge in favour of other less celebrated battles like Arras and Amiens and continually undermines the prominent narrative of Canada in the First World War. Gone are the virtuous knights of chivalry. In their place are shock troops that squabble amongst themselves over scraps of bread and are capable of violent and criminal acts.

Compared to literature of the First World War, which is usually characterized by outrage and cynicism, Canadian novels about the Second World War are surprisingly optimistic. Certainly, these novels do not lack passion or genuine anguish but there is a strong case to be made that they do not have the same violent outrage expressed by

authors like Harrison, Peregrine Acland, or Phillip Child, who depicted the war as a brutalizing and dehumanizing farce. Canadian Second World War novels, on the other hand, are congruous with a thematic trend unique to Canadian literature, first identified by Novak, of the “little man” (96), named for the 1942 novel *Little Man* by G. Herbert Sallans. Like the “cannon fodder” of *Generals Die in Bed*, the soldiers of Canadian Second World War fiction also see themselves as insignificant “little men” trapped in a cycle of mechanized violence over which they have no control or method of escape. Yet, unlike in First World War narratives, the possibility of redemption returns and the soldiers are more self-consciously ethical beings. Novak writes that, in these novels, a “constant tension exists within the individual’s consciousness as he attempts to come to terms with his role as a soldier” (97). This tension results in an increasing isolation both from “the cause for which he is fighting and from his own moral identity” (97). Novels of the Second World War foreground the idea of individual responsibility while themes of nation and nationhood tend to recede. Even the most simplistic Second World War novels are existential meditations on what it means to be a soldier who must act ethically under incredible duress.

Chapter Two, entitled “The Pilgrim and the Prophet: Canadian Second World War Fiction and Midcentury Existentialism,” therefore, reads two important Second World War novels, Birney’s *Turvey* and Klein’s *The Second Scroll*, through the lens of existentialism. The moral tension between law (military or otherwise) and morality is a defining feature of these war novels. Some soldiers delight in the unique experience of existing outside of civilian laws. This irony is highlighted in the preface to the American author James Jones’s *The Thin Red Line* (1962): “This book is dedicated to those greatest

and most heroic of all human endeavours WAR and WARFARE; may they never cease to give us the pleasure, excitement and adrenal stimulation that we need” (Jones viii). The soldiers depicted by Canadian war novelists lack the capacity to equivocate about the horrors they perpetrate let alone enjoy them; there is no higher authority to which they can appeal.

Turvey is one of Canada’s few novels to inject humour into its wartime narrative. As a result, its legacy is rather mixed and it remains a significant outlier in Canadian war studies. Birney’s Private Thomas Leadbeater Turvey is a quintessential little man who is impersonally shuffled along by military bureaucracy. Thanks to his credulity and bumbling incompetence, he is hardly anyone’s idea of an ideal soldier. When he is read in tandem with certain key texts of midcentury existentialism, such as Albert Camus’s “The Myth of Sisyphus” (1942) and Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (1943), however, Turvey’s quirks are transformed into a strategy for ordering a chaotic and violent world. Turvey’s picaresque is an absurd tale and the misadventures of the private from Skookum Falls eventually take on an epic quality. Although he may seem to be tilting at windmills in the style of Don Quixote, his steadfast commitment to his quest to join the Kootenay Highlanders reveals him to be a Canadian Sisyphus. This section on *Turvey*, which comprises the first half of Chapter Two, argues that Birney introduces existentialism and comedy into Canadian war writing as a means of transcending militarism’s tyranny. He may be a little man, but he is smiling.

The protagonist of Klein’s *The Second Scroll* is not a soldier in the traditional sense. Yet, his narrative arc is strikingly similar to the generic conventions of the protagonist soldier described by Thompson. *The Second Scroll*’s unnamed narrator’s

quest for his mysterious Uncle Melech in Europe, and then Israel, hews too closely to the schema of the soldier's narrative for it to be a coincidence. Klein's highly referential and experimental novel, like *The Imperialist* and *Rilla of Ingleside*, broadens the criteria by which a novel can be considered a soldier's narrative and, in so doing, Klein offers what might be considered a blueprint for Canadians, not just those of the Jewish faith, to recover from the unfathomable trauma of the Holocaust. Like Birney, Klein employs existentialism as a means of coping. The abiding atheism of most existentialists does not cohere with Klein's worldview, and so he turns to the Danish Christian existentialist, Søren Kierkegaard, in order to synthesize his religious and existential tendencies. Kierkegaard's *Repetition* (1843) and Martin Buber's *I and Thou* (1923) form a theoretical matrix through which Klein, as war outsider, can make sense of the horrors of the Holocaust and imagine a way forward for Canadians.

Kierkegaard's philosophy also figures prominently in arguably Canada's most accomplished Second World War novel, *Execution*, which has some right to call itself neglected. The existential searching that characterizes *Turvey* and *The Second Scroll* is apotheosized in McDougall's novel about Canadian soldiers trying to preserve their moral lives during the Italian campaign of the Second World War. McDougall's only novel is bookended by two senseless executions. The first execution prompts an existential crisis for the characters involved. The second, paradoxically, somehow atones for the first and moral order is restored. McDougall's allusions to existentialists like Franz Kafka indicate that he wishes his novel to be read within the tradition of existential fiction. The novel's ending, which features a proxy crucifixion, complicates this interpretation since novels within that tradition do not typically allow for spiritual

transcendence. Understanding this seemingly irreconcilable tension means eschewing the dominant form of mid-century existentialism featured in *Turvey* in favour of one that predates the school's consensus atheism articulated primarily by Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* (1843). A close reading of *Execution*, considering the formative texts of existentialism and a comparative reading of works by its international influences, provides a method for parsing the novel's difficult philosophy. Chapter Three analyzes how McDougall is able to transform the soldier figure, traditionally represented as being without agency, into a Knight of Faith.

Chapter Four, "From Memory to History: Timothy Findley's *The Wars*," reckons with the most written about war novel produced by a Canadian. There have been several attempts to decode Findley's playful and metafictional representation of the First World War. As previously mentioned, Novak believes the novel's chief contribution to be the introduction of irony to the war genre. Lorraine York believes the novel to be part and parcel of Findley's entire corpus, which can be read as a treatise on the increasingly mechanized and brutal violence of the twentieth-century. Dennis Duffy analyses the presence of the archivist in the novel to elaborate upon the novel's metafictional qualities. Donna Pennee attributes the novel's success in Canada to how the novel capitalizes on anti-American sentiment, which, thanks to the Vietnam War, was at an all-time high in the late 1970s. Bruce Pirie has argued that within *The Wars* is embedded a subtle subversion of Arthurian Romance. The novel is well canvassed and there is seemingly little new ground left to cover.

This chapter, however, recontextualizes *The Wars* by reading it on a continuum of war writing in Canada. The novel does signal an important shift, though not from realism

to irony as Novak intimates. Findley's tragic account of Robert Ross represents a transition of responsibility from war insider to war outsider. As veterans of the First and Second World Wars inevitably pass away, and the method by which war is understood shifts from memory to history, *The Wars* proposes several methods for preserving the narratives of those who cannot speak for themselves while also puncturing comforting myths about war's dominion over Canadian culture. The soldier's narrative in *The Wars* is mediated through the perspective of an archivist, whose ways of approaching the conflict are necessarily subjective and retrospective. The literature of the Second World War was a return to individual responsibility. *The Wars*, published as Canada began to define itself as global umpire under the auspices of international peacekeeping, returns Canadian war writing not just to the First World War but also to allegorical representations of Canada itself.

The final chapter of the dissertation focuses on contemporary representations of the First World War. These are novels about collective memory that are less concerned with accurately depicting trench battles than with parsing the complex ways in which Canadians have tried to remember and memorialize the dead. There are postmodern elements of these novels inherited from Findley, but as the twentieth century drew to a close, Canadian war writing was primarily concerned with the ways in which the figure of the Canadian soldier had been used and appropriated for nationalistic reasons in the decades since the guns fell silent. These novels also question the possible marginalization that occurs when politics and history are made personal. *Broken Ground* is a scathing indictment of the negligent way the Canadian veteran has been treated in the past and now. In depicting the less than ideal land afforded to Canadian veterans as part of the

Land Settlement Act, Hodgins strikes at the heart of Canada's most enduring myth. Yet, he seems reticent to break with the notion that compelling narratives, even if they are specious, can forge social cohesion.

The Stone Carvers depicts the ideologically loaded vagaries of constructing the Vimy Ridge Memorial. Klara Becker, the novel's soldier stand-in, prevents the erasure of soldiers' narratives by refusing to limit her sculpture to Walter Allward's edict that the monument be strictly allegorical. By the same token, however, Klara contributes to the erasure of soldiers' narratives by rendering the monument the purview not of veterans, whose stories are rarely acknowledged in the novel, but those left behind. *The Stone Carvers* has been criticized for trying to stitch together awkwardly one prominent touchstone of Canadian identity, multiculturalism, with another, Vimy Ridge. Nevertheless, Urquhart's representation of how monuments and other means of commemoration function in society is keenly aware of just how fraught memory, collective or personal, can be.

In summation, this dissertation strives to provide a thorough accounting of the major moves, both formal and thematic, in English-language Canadian war writing in between the years 1900 and 2001. Its special focus on the mutable and highly adaptable figure of the Canadian soldier yields the following interrelated conclusions: first and foremost, given that the popular conception of the Canadian soldier, forged by nationalist mythmaking and secured by cultural memory, as the emblem of duty and sacrifice, a reluctant but competent warrior, is often punctured by Canadian war novels, the soldier can be productively read as an avatar of noncompliance, wherein narratives that question or even actively flout orthodox cultural memory can be articulated. Second, Canadian

war novels challenge the long held assumption that Canada is a country mercifully bereft of grand narratives. This expedient postmodern belief, which makes it possible to portray Canada as a blank slate onto which all manner of ideology can be projected, is challenged by Canadian war novels, particularly in the first decades of the twentieth-century.

Canadian war novels engage with the myriad of ways militarism functions as a grand narrative in Canadian society, and the soldier's narrative enables Canadians to speak about issues related to war that often remain unspoken.

Third, the preeminence of the First World War in Canadian society and its literature meant that novels of the Second World War could write outside of the paradigm of literary nationalism. These novels, like Birney's *Turvey* and McDougall's *Execution* (1958), resist commenting on matters of national identity in favour of discussions of individual responsibility, which often explicitly engage with existential philosophy. These authors universalize the soldier's experience to construct an "apocalyptic vision of human community and morality, in which the nation is a tantalizing but elusive delusion" (Webb *Occupants of Memory* 20). Finally, as memory gives way to history in the late twentieth century, war writing shifts again away from the perspective of the war insider, the soldier, to that of the war outsider, the witness. These novels enact and comment upon Canadian cultural memory. These commentaries are all examinations of Canadian attempts to remember and memorialize war's casualties as well as to redress past marginalization. Their emphasis on reading the past as a means of understanding the present, however, necessarily entails the exact erasures they seek to correct. In saying more about "us" in the present than those in the past these novels run the risk of

becoming acts of consumption, a means of saying something about “our” sympathy and benevolence, thus tending towards solipsism.

Collective memory is a process by which a multitude of disparate narratives are reduced and synthesized into one easily digestible narrative. To a certain extent, so is a dissertation. It is necessarily an exercise in selection and omission. Stephen Greenblatt writes that those who study literature have the power to “impose fictions upon the world and... enforce the acceptance of fictions that are known to be fictions.” This is something this dissertation sincerely wants to avoid. The story of Canada and war is not restricted to the twentieth-century. Yet, selecting logical start and end dates for the texts to be studied in depth was crucial. In that regard, this dissertation takes its cues from Eric Hobsbawm, whose own study of the twentieth century, *The Age of Extremes*, focuses on what he calls “the short twentieth century”: 1914-1991. This dissertation adapts and updates Hobsbawm’s framework to a Canadian perspective in order to account for the lead up to the First World War and the final years of the twentieth-century, which saw renewed interest in the First World War.

A further contextualization of Canada’s early war literature will no doubt inform readings of key texts. Metaphors of peace and reconciliation are simply incongruous with Canada’s violent early literature. Canada’s pre-confederation history is one of conquest, wars, invasions, and border raids. This history comes with its own requisite archetypal moments and figures – the war of 1812 and the ahistoric claim that Canadian soldiers burned down the White House, for instance. Sir Isaac Brock, Tecumseh, and Laura Secord have all at various points proven to be useful to the process of identity formation

and their status as cultural markers anticipate the twentieth century's preoccupation with the soldier figure.

Similarly, the deaths of Generals Wolfe and Montcalm at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham have been appropriated as a narrative that anticipates what Canada would become. Two great men, one English and one French, perish as a new country is born promising a kind of Hegelian synthesis in their demise. Even the name, the Plains of Abraham, seems rife with biblical significance. It implies paternity and sacrifice, themes that recur again and again in Canadian war novels. Some research into the origin of the name, however, is a bit anticlimactic. The plains were simply named after their original owner, Abraham Martin.

This dissertation, therefore, is only concerned with the literary representations of the Canadian soldier in twentieth-century war novels: the oldest novel discussed in depth is 1904's *The Imperialist* and the most recent is 2001's *The Stone Carvers*. The tragic events of September 11th 2001 have had such an impact on foreign policy and global affairs that novels published in its wake, like Itani's *Deafening* and Boyden's *Three Day Road*, have a slightly different pallor than their predecessors and some distance will likely be required before novels from this time period can be adequately integrated into the broader narrative of Canadian war fiction.

This dissertation stipulates that the Canadian war novel is a well-defined literary genre with its own distinct tropes and expectations. As a result, Canadian short stories, plays, and poems with war themes are not addressed at length. Baetz's anthology of Canadian war poetry, *Canadian Poetry from World War I: An Anthology* (2009) and Muriel Whitaker's collection, *Great Canadian War Stories* (2001) are important

contributions to the field, but a book-length work on these two separate genres is still waiting to be written. Marisa McHugh's 2013 dissertation, "The Invasion of the Home Front: Revisiting, Rewriting, and Replaying the First World War in Contemporary Canadian Plays," also completed at the University of Ottawa, is an invaluable tool for scholars interested in how war has been depicted on Canadian stages.

This dissertation is meant to be not exhaustive but representative. Many war novels are so similar to one another that discussing each one at length would be redundant. Therefore, this dissertation selects emblematic and illustrative texts to study at length. Although this dissertation hopes to broaden the scope of what constitutes a soldier in war fiction, not every novel with war as its background features a soldier figure, for example Joy Kogawa's *Obsasan* (1981). This dissertation is by no means the end of the conversation on Canadian war narratives. Its place in Canadian literary scholarship is more akin to how the literary theorist Kenneth Burke described conversation at a dinner party:

You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, as discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about... You listen for a while, until you decide you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar... The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress. (100-101)

The goal of this dissertation is merely to contribute heartily while it can.

This dissertation analyzes the representation of the Canadian soldier while keeping one foot squarely in the modern era with an eye on its contemporary criticism in

order to find new directions from old. The twentieth-century progression of the Canadian soldier from imperial warrior to blue-helmeted peacekeeper and back to warrior is reflected in Canadian war fiction, but in an ever-shifting political and cultural landscape, no one reading is sufficient. The soldier is a mutable figure that can be modified and adapted to suit the tenor of the time. This dissertation, therefore, is three-pronged: it traces the representation of the soldier throughout the twentieth-century in Canadian novels; it examines the seemingly paradoxical mid-century relationship between Canadian war novels and existentialism; and it traces the modern obsession in Canadian war literature with memory and memorialisation. The stakes of this dissertation are to provide a vision not only of how Canada used to be but also how it is now.

CHAPTER ONE

From Crusaders to Cannon Fodder: Cultures of Militarization in Canadian War Novels, 1900-1930

Earle Birney once wrote of Canadians, “It is only by our lack of ghosts / we’re haunted” (138). It is a line so pithy and quotable that it goes largely unchallenged. Birney’s words echo a longstanding literary and cultural perception of Canada as a blank slate bereft of defining national myths or unifying historical narratives. This historical lacuna has been viewed as an advantage because it liberates Canada from a domineering master-narrative. For Robert Kroetsch, the “willingness to refuse privilege to a restricted or restrictive cluster of meta-narratives becomes a Canadian strategy for survival” (23). Canadian writers, however, especially war writers, have searched high and low for “ghosts” for nearly two centuries.

Yet, W.J. Keith wrote confidently in 1981, “[S]erious historical fiction does not yet form a prominent part of Canadian literature” (qtd. in Wylie, *Speculative Fictions* 4). The evidence for this assertion, however, is specious, to say the least. From its beginnings, Canadian literature is instantly nostalgic. Early Canadian writers consistently set their novels in the past as a means of preserving historical continuity. Inextricable from this nostalgia is a thematic obsession with war and the men who fight in it. John Richardson’s *Wacousta* (1832), the first Canadian attempt at historical fiction, studies the 1763 siege of Detroit, an event that occurred approximately seventy years before the novel’s publication. William Kirby’s *The Golden Dog* (1877) and Gilbert Parker’s *The Seats of the Mighty* similarly cast their narrative gaze back to the past of New France and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham. These early novels foreshadow an obsession with

history and historical narrative that will dominate Canadian fiction in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. War novels as disparate as *The Wars* and *Broken Ground* can all trace part of their literary DNA to these early novels.

This distinctly Canadian obsession with history is supposedly infused with an abiding suspicion of linearity and metanarrative. For some, this incredulity has resulted in cultural disunity. There are few unproblematic touchstones to which Canadians can point as unequivocally “Canadian.” For Kroetsch, Canadian disunity, a distrust of the grand cultural myths and their goals, has defined Canadian unity. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean-François Lyotard describes the postmodern condition as being characterized by incredulity toward metanarrative. This definition has prompted such critics as Kroetsch to declare that Canada is a postmodern nation whose fiction has never been modern. His assertion that “Canadian literature evolved directly from Victorian into Postmodern” is one of the most repeated phrases in the discipline (1). The primary mode by which Canadian fiction has used its incredulity to its advantage has been in what Linda Hutcheon dubbed in *The Canadian Postmodern* as “historiographic metafiction.” Hutcheon argues that irony is the primary mode through which Canada understands itself: “Canada’s voice has often been a double one, that of the forked tongue of irony” (*As Canadian as Possible* 23). This development is a recent one, and its preeminence in Canadian literary studies has resulted in the erasure of war narratives that cannot be viewed through the lens of postmodernism, post-structuralism, or historiographic metafiction.

Despite Hutcheon’s assertions, it is extremely difficult to read Canadian novels of the First World War, particularly those written between 1915 and 1929, and detect even

the slightest hint of irony or incredulity. These novels, like Basil King's *The High Heart* (1917), Ralph Connor's *Sky Pilot in No Man's Land* (1919), or Henry Beckles Willson's *Redemption* (1924), are nothing if not sincere. Though Northrop Frye argues in the *Anatomy of Criticism* that "all literature is ironic in the sense that 'what it says' is never 'what it means'" (*Splitting Images* 14), these novels come close to blurring that dichotomy. With a few notable exceptions, Canadian novels of the First World War are remarkably simplistic from an ethical perspective.

These novels are not characterized by the existential introspection that would become the norm by mid-century. They are formulaic and patriotic novels designed to perpetuate comforting myths about the righteousness of the Canadian cause and the stability of the British Empire. This mode of war-writing persisted in Canada well into the late 1920s after most other countries had abandoned it. Frank Davey writes,

The First World War has usually been constructed in Canadian history and culture as a national rite of passage.... [Historians] have attempted to develop theses that the Canadian units had specific qualities, and that these qualities—whether tenacity, courage, or tactical ingenuity—were significant in giving Canadians a sign of their own distinctiveness. (113)

In fact, as Daniel Coleman and others have pointed out, early Canadian novels had already identified the specific racial and cultural qualities of Canadians that made them distinct. War novelists contributed to these early narratives by infusing their novels with martial language within a complicated theoretical matrix of masculinity, Christianity, and imperialism.

Through this prism, the First World War was portrayed as a literal crusade with the Canadian army playing the role of Christian soldiers. Despite what Hutcheon and Kroetsch argue, it is hard to view militarism in Canada, whether overt or in the more palatable guise of international peacekeeping, as anything but a master-narrative. As Jennifer Blair points out:

Scholars may have become skilful at identifying the discursive processes of history, and may successfully argue that the contradictions within these processes signal resistances to dominant ideological paradigms, but these arguments have succeeded at the expense of a critical acknowledgement of the social experiences and effects of history, as well as a fuller appreciation of the dynamics of the active processes of time and memory. In other words, criticism has lost those aspects of “the past,” of the passage of time, that are distinct from the textual. (204)

In *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida writes, “Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony” (37). The ghosts that populate *The Stone Carvers*, *Broken Ground* and other war novels are a stark reminder of that fact. As Ann-Marie MacDonald points out in her play “The Arab’s Mouth,” whether one believes in ghosts is largely irrelevant because “That’s of precious little concern to the ghosts” (16).

A Real Holiday: Civic Militarism in the Patriotic Canadian War Novel

The dominant literary formula of the First World War did not emerge wholly out of the mud of the trenches. Though perfected in the First World War, novels written in the wake of the South African War anticipated the Christian imperialist paradigm that would define novels written in the war era. Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Imperialist* is a prime example. In the early twentieth century, Canada was a conservative Christian nation. A great deal of its nationalism was derived from its place within the British Empire. The ultimate literary expression of the connection between Dominion and Empire is Lorne Murchison's stump speech in *The Imperialist*. Lorne makes an impassioned plea on behalf of the Conservative party to resist American favour and adopt preferential trade with Great Britain in order for Canada to assert itself on the world stage within the structures of the Empire. Lorne, the consummate idealist, is defeated at election; he does not even win the girl. Written in the wake of the imperial embarrassment in the South African War, *The Imperialist* pronounces Victorian idealism and Canadian nationalism on life support or at least in dire need of medical attention. What is significant about *The Imperialist*, and often forgotten, is its unique status as a war novel. Though it is nominally about small-town politics, the South African War, imperial in its origins, casts a long shadow over the novel and confirms militarism as a metanarrative in a parochial context.

The South African War (1899-1902) was the largest war fought by Canadians between Confederation and the First World War. It is a ghost that haunts Duncan's novel and, when read in this martial context, *The Imperialist* is a quintessential postwar novel,

in which characters strive to make sense of a new set of paradigms forged as the result of a faraway conflict – a theme that will be picked up again in *Rilla of Ingleside*, *The Second Scroll*, and many other war novels. *The Imperialist* demonstrates how, through martial language and cultural ritual, militarism can be insinuated into cultural practice during peacetime. The integration of militarism into civic life would have an untold impact on the mindset of Canadians as the First World War broke out in 1914.

The most coherent Canadian examination of the ubiquity of military culture in quotidian life is a 2010 special issue of *Topia, Cultures of Militarization*, edited by Jody Berland and Blake Fitzpatrick. The essays in this collection show how the line differentiating military culture from mainstream culture is often blurred. For Catherine Lutz, militarism is “simultaneously a discursive process, involving a shift in general societal beliefs and values in ways necessary to legitimate the use of force, the organization of large standing armies and their leaders, and the higher taxes or tributes used to pay for them” (723). In short, militarization is not something that just happens during times of war. For evidence of this, one needs look no further than how the bicentennial of the War of 1812 was wholeheartedly embraced by the Canadian federal government. Andrew Cohen sees the government’s efforts as “a form of propaganda, and it seems to have married the government’s interest in the military with its interest, some would say obsession, with the War of 1812. It’s clearly, to me, part of a campaign to politicize history” (Austen). To commemorate the war, the Canadian government spent \$6.5 million on television commercials alone. Another example that reveals the intertwined nature of militarism and civic culture occurred during the G20 summit held in Toronto in 2010 in which \$1 billion was spent to transform vast swaths of the city into an

armed security encampment where citizens, not all radicals, were detained for hours without water, food, or access to bathroom facilities. Berland and Fitzpatrick situate militarism as a master narrative wherein military diction is inseparable from the language of power, sweeping aside human suffering as mere “collateral damage” in the service of security. Military presence is normalized in society and members of society are complicit in this dominance.

The Imperialist anticipates this process. The relationship of the fictional town of Elgin, based on Duncan’s hometown of Brantford, to war and the military is inextricably linked to the South African War. Canada had a complicated relationship to the war, which simultaneously bolstered Canadian nationalism and fortified imperial sentiment but also served as a harbinger for a violent century. It prompted serious questions for Canadians about the limits of empire. Carman Miller argues, “Until overshadowed by the Great War (1914-1918), for many Canadians the South African War was the most significant public event of the twentieth century” (xi). Despite the war’s prominence in cultural life, there were few attempts by Canadian writers to depict the war: “the Boer war did not seem to capture the imagination of the nation’s writers” (Coates 1188). Canadians looked to British writers like Rudyard Kipling and John Buchan for Romantic representations of the war in South Africa. Though not strictly a war novel, *The Imperialist* is a notable exception. Webb describes *The Imperialist* as “the first twentieth-century novel to use war as a key subtext.” For him, “it provides a seminal depiction of post-war consciousness” (*Occupant of Memory* 34) and “capture[s] the social atmosphere of a postwar world in which Canadians are forced to acknowledge the limits of militarist

discourse and imperialist ideology as foundations of a progressive national vision” (“The Silent Flag” 76).

Over seven-thousand Canadians participated in the war, and two-hundred-and-seventy lost their lives. This was a relatively low death rate (3.6% of enlistments), and though Canadian soldiers wrote letters home about the technological innovations that would radically alter the nature of warfare in the twentieth century, the vast majority returned home proud to have served the empire. The South African War did little to disabuse Canadians of the persistent myth that war was an exercise undertaken to prove one’s worth and test one’s mettle: “the dominant legacy of the South African War relied on an old myth – that war is an exercise in manly prowess, deadly for some, glorious for most” (*Occupants of Memory* 30). With Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s praise that the Canadian soldiers constituted “probably the finest brigade in the whole army” (329) ringing in their ears, Canadians began the twentieth century with a renewed sense of pride in the military, inseparable from their pride in the British Empire.

Canada’s increasingly militaristic attitude was strengthened by civic ritual. Duncan’s description of Elgin’s Victoria Day celebrations cannot be read as anything but a representation of civic militarism in action:

Here it was a real holiday, that woke you with bells and cannon – who had forgotten the time the ancient piece of ordinance in “the Square” blew out all the windows in the Methodist church? – and went on with squibs and crackers till you didn’t know where to step on the sidewalks, and ended up splendidly with rockets and fire-balloons and drunken Indians vociferous on their way to the lock-up. (45)

The image in this passage of an annual reenactment of war is a scene of near Bakhtinian Carnavalesque. The normally staid and sober Elgin is afforded the opportunity, on the Queen's birthday no less, to enact, cathartically and anarchically, a ritual of violence with "bells and cannon" and "rockets and fire-balloons" serving as makeshift bomb blasts. This is a militaristic ritual of shared memory and collective identity that serves to make normal that which should be abnormal – a military presence in Elgin. The "drunken Indians," who play the role of prisoners of war, are "the enemy" in this ritualized pantomime, and also represent the descendants of the victims of the British Empire's conquest of Canada: "No violence takes place, but it is reified into the social fabric of the town, lying dormant until the next war" ("The Silent Flag" 81).

These rituals, which are primarily meant to ensure that militarism and patriotism remain one and the same, also serve to stoke the baser impulses of their participants. For Duncan, these impulses are biologically determined: "Belief in England was in the blood... Then the old dog of war that has his kennel in every man rose and shook himself, and presently there would be a baying!" (91). Duncan makes it clear that the impulse for war exists in the blood of "every man," but given the Victoria Day celebration described in the novel's opening chapter – a coherent enactment of civic militarism – it is impossible not to read this supposedly natural feeling as at least partially constructed by culture.

The tension between what is believed to be innate and what is culturally determined exemplifies what Paul Virilio has termed "pure war." Pure war does not refer to war on the conventional battlefield but rather the constant preparation for war during times of peace: war "which isn't enacted out in repetition but in infinite preparation" (92).

In a state of “pure war,” civilian and military institutions are conflated. *The Imperialist* depicts one such society. The Victoria Day celebration and its ensuing martial pride reveal the distinction between civilian and soldier to be perverted. In such a society, Virillo writes that it becomes increasingly difficult to determine where the military begins and where, if ever, it ends: “Militarism seeps into the social, technological and economic, giving specific form and instruction to civic life” (Berland and Fitzgerald 14). Only one character in *The Imperialist* served in the South African War. Yet, each and every citizen of Elgin, even its First Nations members, instinctively knows how to act because they take their cues from civic culture. For them, war has become permanent; it is a way of life. This synthesis is emblematic of historian Carl Berger’s assertion that war in Canada reinforced “martial virtues” as prevention against “the decay and deterioration of the national character” (233-234). After the South African War, war and its connection to British values became increasingly “entangled in the ‘hearts and minds’ of citizens, the intimate spaces of discreet communities, lived relationships and identity” (Berland and Fitzgerald 14).

Canadian success in South Africa confirmed the predominant Canadian belief in the righteousness of the Imperial mission and the glorious nature of warfare. Although Duncan expressed ambivalence about the imperial project in her journalism and Lorne is ultimately unsuccessful in his quest to establish stronger economic ties to Britain, *The Imperialist* depicts the typical mindset adopted by Canadians in the early twentieth century and carried with them as war in Europe broke out in 1914. It is a cliché now to view the First World War as an unparalleled calamity of violence. The vast majority of Canadians, however, endorsed the war, and this was reflected in the national literature.

As Barry Dunbar, a man who without doubt witnessed many Victoria Day celebrations, says in Ralph Connor's *Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*, "when Britain is at war my country is at war, and when my country is at war I ought to be there" (82).

For most of its history and especially since Confederation, Canada has had a complicated and, at times, contradictory relationship with war and peace. As in most countries, this relationship is fraught with ideological significance. Canada's founding as a dominion in 1867 is often presented in sharp contrast with how the United States wrested independence from Great Britain. While American revolutionaries took their freedom through force, the more prudent Fathers of Confederation relied on reason, rhetoric, and official institutions. These two paths to statehood are often contrasted to explain divergences in national character between the two neighbours. Simon Langlois describes the disparate national identities this way; the United States "made a revolution that was liberal, egalitarian, rebel, and whig; the other [Canada] a counterrevolution that was conservative, authoritarian, Loyalist, and tory" (327). Given Canada's tenuous geopolitical situation and cultural diversity, it was necessary to define a "Canadian" type. Here, Daniel Coleman's examination of early Canadian culture, *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* (2006), is a useful theoretical lens for understanding how militarism became intertwined with Britishness and, therefore, Canadianness.

Coleman argues that the myth of white Canadian civility was perpetuated in literature by four common allegorical figures: the Loyalist brother, the Scottish orphan, the muscular Christian, and the maturing colonial son. These figures allowed Canadians to assert Britishness, as opposed to merely Englishness or Americanness, as the default culture in Canada. The culture was defined by the discursive notion of "civility." And,

since each of the allegorical figures was forged in the harsh northern climes of Canada, they could even be figured as superior to their British ancestors and American counterparts.

The archetypes identified by Coleman are particularly conspicuous in novels about war. This is not surprising since the American revolutionary war was an “origin-making trauma” for Canadian culture, “where the ideal of fraternity meets the threat of fratricide” (Sugars). John Richardson’s war novel *The Canadian Brothers* serves as an example of how the figure of the Loyalist brother was incorporated into Canadian identity. Loyalist honour is understood only as a reaction to violence between brothers. The loyalist, thanks to his greater sense of civility and commitment to communal values over materialistic ones, is ethically superior to his American brother and, therefore, makes for the perfect Canadian citizen. The revolutionary war, then, is the “necessary precursor to the next generation’s idyll of innocence” (Coleman 69).

The rest of the other Canadian types identified by Coleman are also forged through violence. The Scottish orphan and the muscular Christian are recurring tropes in the war writing of Ralph Connor and others. Gilbert Parker’s *The Seats of the Mighty*, Connor’s *The Foreigner* (1909), and J.S. Woodsworth’s *Strangers within Our Gates* (1909) all merge the tropes of war literature with the allegorical figures of Canadian white civility to further delineate and define what constitutes the right way to be Canadian. As a result, Canadian identity and masculinity become inseparable from its martial origins. To be Canadian is to be a soldier. To be a Canadian man is to be Barry Dunbar, ready at a moment’s notice to fight for King and Country.

During the First World War, the Canadian literary market was inundated with novels about the war, which are remarkably homogenous in both theme and form. The typical post-First World War novel follows a set formula established by Ralph Connor, the era's most popular writer, who, unlike most of the author's writing in the milieu, had actually been to the front as a military chaplain. These novels can be characterized as "rhetorical, romantic, idealistic, and national" (Novak 7). Written to adhere to the Protestant British values of a community which was staunchly pro-war at the outset of the conflict, these war narratives continue the national project represented by *The Imperialist*. These novels were Romance, which sought to celebrate Canada's war effort and to "evangelize... faith in God and of reliance on basic human virtues" (7). They entwined the First World War, and Canada's performance in it, with an unstoppable march towards progress.

Although there are some notable exceptions, like the staunchly anti-war *Aleta Day* by Francis Marion Beynon, the vast majority of Canadian novels followed the "grand adventure" paradigm of war writing. Most of these novels are long forgotten due to their interchangeable plots and stock characters. Furthermore, these novels simply do not fit with the widely held conception of war as an unforgivable transgression against civilization. While these writers may not have the depth or style of the kinds of authors favoured by Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), the readiness of critics to dismiss these patriotic Romances constitutes a missed opportunity to better comprehend the intersection of Britishness, Christianity, and masculinity in Canadian culture in the early twentieth century. As Blair argues, historiography has trumped history and the past stays largely ignored. The ideas contained within these patriotic novels

reflected and shaped the ideology of many Canadians, including those who fought in the First World War. The confluence of these ideas, apparent in *The Imperialist*, is a direct result of military culture becoming mainstream culture. As a result, Canadian soldiers in the patriotic fiction of the First World War are continually represented as holy crusaders.

The canonical view of literature of the First World War, characterized by the works of Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, is defined by representations of war as an unremittingly brutal crime against civilization. This viewpoint, however, is largely selective and omits most of the novels written during and immediately after the war. Most writers evoked what Fussell calls “high diction” and bandied about terms like “grand adventure” and “glorious battle.” What is remarkable is that these writers were not pressured to write this way – at least not literally. Few of these authors were officially involved in Canada’s war propaganda campaign. During the First World War, the British government’s Director of Propaganda recruited many members of the literary community to give voice to the British cause, including G.K. Chesterton, Rudyard Kipling, and C.S. Lewis. There was no Canadian equivalent to this campaign, perhaps because Canada did not need one.

There are few war novels written before 1929 that do not have a propagandistic element. Charles Gordon, or as he would come to be known, Ralph Connor, did work for Sam Hughes in an official capacity. He had previously served as Chaplain with Winnipeg’s 79th Cameron Highlanders before being promoted to Chaplain-in-Chief for the Canadian Forces Overseas. Starting in 1917, he delivered public addresses around Canada and in the United States evangelizing the righteousness of the Canadian cause. His grandly Romantic style dominated Canadian war fiction until the end of the 1920s.

The Canadian anti-war novels that emerged in the 1930s can be read only as a reaction to his intransigent patriotism and unwillingness to let go of his belief in the political and cultural values of the Victorian era. In *The Major* (1917), the narrator sums up Connor's simplistic view of the war and what it meant for the men who fight it: "For faith, righteousness, for humanity, our Empire had accepted war. And now, as ever, the pathway to immortality for men and for nations was the pathway of sacrifice" (335). Two of Connor's war novels were written after Hughes had recruited him, but it is more likely that Connor was asked to help because he was already outspoken in favour of the war and there was little need to tailor his novels to fit any state-sponsored message.

Connor wrote three novels about the First World War: *The Major*, *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*, and *Treading the Winepress* (1925). His soldiers are conspicuous examples of the trope Coleman identifies in *White Civility* as the "Muscular Christian." For Connor, the terms "nation" and "race" are synonyms. Each of his protagonists, whatever their origins, is a loyal British subject and a devoted Christian, who is as comfortable in the country as he is in the city. In *Treading the Winepress*, one character exclaims, "we are all one people, one Empire, [and subjects of] one King" (190). The war provides each of Connor's protagonists the opportunity to prove his mettle and confirm his commitment to British imperial identity. With war as its crucial pretense, however, the Muscular Christian is justified in morphing into a literal crusader. In *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*, Dunbar, who like Connor serves as a military chaplain, conflates the First World War with God's will: "From the first word he lifted his audience to the high plane of sacrament and sacrifice. It was the ancient sacrifice that the noblest of the race had always been called upon to make... They were offering themselves to God" (110).

Upon hearing Dunbar's sermon, the men feel as though they are taking part in, and perhaps giving their life for, a "holy cause" (111). In *Treading the Winepress*, the war and its inherent sacrifices prompt the soldiers to reconsider what is truly important:

The non-essentials, the externals, the mere things of life were being weighed in eternal balances and were being discovered to be lighter than vanity. The discovery was being made that man shall not live by bread alone. In all this reevaluation of life, religion could not escape. The formal, the temporary were being thrust aside to make place for the Eternal and the Divine. (224)

The First World War, in Connor's depiction, is a war not about European geopolitics but about a moral crusade where authority rests not in the structures of the military or the state but with God. Or perhaps, for Connor, these three powerful forces all work in tandem.

Many Canadian novelists, not just Connor, conceived of the First World War as no less than a Holy War. In Basil King's *The City of Comrades*, for example, the war was "the great dramatic conflict between good and evil to which human nature has been working up ever since it committed its first sin" (281). In these novels, the soldier was no less than "Jesus in Khaki" (Cooperman 18). The protagonist of *The City of Comrades* has little doubt that the war he has been fighting "was a holy war, to be fought to a holy end" (325). This sort of messianic viewpoint would be parodied to the point of evisceration in the war novels published after Connor's reign as Poet Laureate of the trenches expired. Charles Yale Harrison, in his novels, mocks pastor figures at every opportunity. Padre Doorn, the military chaplain in Colin McDougall's *Execution*, also views the soldiers in

his charge as righteous crusaders until the realities of wartime violence shock him out of this facile ideology and he suffers a nervous breakdown.

For Connor, raised in the same Victorian and Presbyterian world as Duncan, militarism is inextricable from nationalism, imperialism, and Christianity. He is a by-product of the type of civic society represented in *The Imperialist*, wherein ritual and other aspects of civic life combine to render normal that which should be abhorrent. As a result, the glee with which some of Connor's characters greet the declaration of war is understandable. There is no choice; there is only duty. For Barry Dunbar, it was a "perfectly reasonable and natural thing that when the Empire was threatened, they should spring for the fight. There was nothing heroic in that. They were doing their simple duty" (*Sky Pilot* 142).

One of the most obvious ways militarism perverts the ethical lives of the soldiers depicted in Connor's novels is the cult of death that emerges in the trenches. Connor represents death as not something to be feared but rather something to be welcomed because it is testament to the soldier's commitment to the values for which he is fighting. In *The Major*, Larry Gwynne is practically giddy upon hearing news of his friend Jack's death, "My God... What a great death!" (368). When Barry finally dies shielding a fellow soldier from gun fire in *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*, the language of glorious sacrifice is evoked once again in his final words, "God is good. Never be afraid to carry on" (343). These scenes exemplify what Fussell writes in *The Great War and Modern Memory*: how war literature is complicit in the way in which the "drift of modern history domesticates the fantastic and normalizes the unspeakable. And the catastrophe that begins it is the Great War" (74).

Though Romance was still the dominant mode through which writers engaged with the First World War, there were a few examples of notable outliers in the 1920s who experimented with realist style. There is a mid-decade indication that Romance's hold on the Canadian understanding of the war may be slipping. Bertrand Sinclair's *The Inverted Pyramid* (1924), like most of his novels, is firmly entrenched in the Romance tradition and adheres to most of its tropes. The novel's protagonists, however, express a kind of anti-authoritarian dissent not at all common to the genre. They also question the rhetoric of sacrifice invoked in wartime:

People prattle on about the supreme sacrifice, as if that were a reward in itself.

Damn them, they don't know what it means. I'm sick of all the saccharine tosh I hear about the war. It may have been necessary, and necessary jobs have to be done. But if the war-glorifiers were taken out and given a sniff of gas... they might change their mind about the soul-uplifting part of it. (196)

The Inverted Pyramid represents a moment of transition for Canadian representations of the war and, as Novak notes, "strikes at the core of the traditional romance myth" (60). Although the war is still described as "necessary," one can detect a kernel of doubt in how it is being framed. Sinclair's novel also represents the schism that came to define the debate surrounding the anti-war movement – the dueling perspectives of those who had been there and those who had not. The fact that interwar novelists turned so often to realism is not surprising given that the majority of them, like Harrison, Peregrine Acland, and Philip Child, had served in Europe. Given what they had seen, writing within the Romance tradition was impossible.

Even before the publication of *The Inverted Pyramid*, hints of realism can be detected from a surprising source – L.M. Montgomery’s First World War novel, *Rilla of Ingleside*. The pastoral paradise of Avonlea hardly seems like the appropriate setting for a war novel, and *Rilla of Ingleside* provides many passages that offer descriptions of Prince Edward Island that conform to her particular brand of regional Romance: “It was a warm, golden-cloudy, loveable afternoon” is the novel’s opening line, for example (1). *Rilla of Ingleside*, however, is one of the most sophisticated patriotic war novels produced in Canada. For Colin Hill, “*Rilla* is one of very few early twentieth-century novels, Canadian or foreign, to offer a sustained and sociological examination of the impact of the Great War on the life of an entire community” (7).

Published in 1921, the novel was written while Montgomery was living in Leaskdale, Ontario, far from the idyllic Atlantic climes she made famous. On August 5th 1914, Montgomery wrote in her diary, “England has declared war on Germany! Good God, I cannot believe it! It must be a horrible dream. It has come up like a thundercloud” (SJ, II, 150). Reading *Rilla of Ingleside* in tandem with *The Imperialist* illuminates the novel’s complex relationship to the war. These two novels, written by women in/of or about Ontario, serve as crucial bookends for understanding Canadian society before and after the First World War. Both novels acknowledge militarism to be a persistent Canadian metanarrative, but both authors stop just short of leveling a sustained critique. Avonlea provides a significant counterpoint to Duncan’s Elgin. *Rilla of Ingleside* is one of the few novels to acknowledge the cultures of militarization intrinsic to Canadian society and the problematic legacy of anachronistic Victorian ideals. One of the ways in which Montgomery challenges lingering Victorian conventions is its generic

experimentation. It is a novel that seems to be the epitome of Romance but, in fact, strives for realism. The novel's romantic tendencies serve as a Trojan horse for a wider critique: "It is driven by a romantic plot in which Rilla moves from childlike innocence to marriage; at the same time, it strives to document the effects of the Great War with realism and accuracy" (Hill 7).

Although Hill calls this comingling of genres "generic confusion," it is a deliberate strategy. The novel's abiding Romanticism heightens the transgressive nature of the realist intrusions. The First World War is the catalyst for Rilla's bildungsroman, and her progression from innocence to maturity, in a martial context, renders her the novel's de-facto soldier and her sacrifices are brought to the fore. In the novel's early sections, Rilla, youngest child of Anne and Gilbert Blythe, is the paragon of a naïve and pampered teenage girl: "I want everything – everything a girl can have... I heard someone say once that the years from fifteen to nineteen are the best years in a girl's life. I'm going to make them perfectly splendid – just fill them with fun" (15). Published three years after the war ended, the dramatic irony of Rilla's ignorance is exaggerated: "Who is this Archduke man who has been murdered?... What does it matter to us?" (11). As the brutality of the war becomes more apparent and the perimeter of the war's impact stretches to include P.E.I. – Rilla's brothers, Walter and Jem, and her lover, Kenneth Ford, go off to war – Rilla undergoes a significant change and becomes an active contributor to the war effort on the home front. Her parents notice a change in her, "She has changed into a capable, womanly girl" (258). In a surprising turn, Rilla becomes, like the workers in J.G. Sime's 1919 short story "Munitions!", a woman who actively contributes to the war effort on the home front:

Hard work. Long hours. Discomfort. Strain. That was about the sum of it, of all that she had gained . . . but then, the sense of freedom! The joy of being done with cap and apron. The feeling that you could draw your breath—speak as you liked—wear overalls like men—curse if you wanted to. (332)

Rilla experiences a similar kind of joy and liberation prompted by the loosening of gender roles during the war but, like the Bakhtinian carnivalesque of Elgin's Victoria Day celebration, it turns out to be short-lived.

Even a cursory examination of women's work during the First World War reveals the slogan "Make Do and Mend" to be insultingly inadequate. The way that work is often framed is ideologically loaded. It is now cliché to regard the First World War as a period of liberation because it hastened the integration of women into paid work and relieved many women of their tether to the domestic sphere. This belief, however, serves as a politically comforting national fable. For Catherine Speck, "War is particularly gender-biased, dominated by the physical and cognitive spatial organization of 'the front' and the 'home front' that categorizes the roles of men and women in wartime and implies that the location and contribution of women on the home front is on a lesser scale" (2). There has been some resistance to this narrative of female social and economic progress. Penny Summerfield argues that the First World War served as a catalyst for the segregation of women into lower-paying "inferior" sectors of work while not relieving them of their domestic duties at all.

In her representation of Rilla's burgeoning social consciousness, Montgomery achieves a synthesis of theme and form. As Rilla sheds her Romantic pretensions in favour of a more realistic ethos, so too does the novel. The shift can be seen in Rilla's

diary: “Rilla’s entries begin as trite and idealistic musings on the nature of romance, but by the end of the novel, they reflect the intellectual seriousness and practicality she has acquired as a result of her war experience” (Hill 8). This transition, however, does not last long and by the novel’s end, Romance once again asserts its dominance. Rilla’s brother Walter is killed in Europe, and, in describing his death to her, Jem - and Montgomery as well - fall back on the old comforting myths about glorious death and righteous sacrifice: “Do you know, Walter was *never* frightened after he got to the front. *Realities* never scared him — only his imagination could do that” (275). As George L. Parker notes, Montgomery was “never comfortable with the frank realism of fiction after the First World War” (761).

Montgomery’s war novel flirts with realism but ultimately cannot resist the comforts of Romance. In a 1921 letter to Ephraim Weber, Montgomery clarifies the novel’s purpose: “It is really a ‘story for girls’... I wrote it as a tribute to the girlhood of Canada. So it’s my only ‘novel with a purpose’” (Tiessen 88). In that regard, *Rilla of Ingleside* is a quintessential *fin-de-siècle* novel transported to the early 1920s. Its portrayal of an infinitely unstable world is an illustration of the fears plaguing Canadians during the First World War. But, while for a brief time the world is turned upside-down by war, Victorian moral order is finally restored and the dominance of Christianity, imperialism, and masculinity is left largely unchallenged. Middle-class readers of *Rilla of Ingleside* ultimately got what they wanted from Montgomery and Avonlea: a representation of themselves and their values. Rilla’s reversion to form is reinforced at novel’s end when Kenneth finally proposes marriage to Rilla. Her affirmative response, “yeth,” is a regression back to her youthful speech impediment, suggesting that, now that

she can settle down and be a wife and mother, the lessons she learned during the war are obsolete. Walter, then, did not die to usher the world from Victorianism into modernism but rather to defend the status quo and preserve Victorian supremacy.

What Montgomery thought of the First World War remains a source of some controversy. In a 1916 letter, Montgomery chastises Weber for even questioning the war's value:

Surely, surely, you cannot so have missed the very meaning of this war. I believe that it is the most righteous war that England ever waged and worthy of every drop of Canadian blood. (Tiessen 61)

By 1921, however, *Rilla of Ingleside's* complex depiction of the legacy of Canadian militarism tells a different story. Margery Fee and Ruth Cawker sum up the novel's attitude to war this way: "Rilla degenerates into a chauvinistic tract for Canadian support of Great Britain in World War One" (76). This dismissal is overly simplistic and fails to take into account Montgomery's unique status as literary celebrity and her proximity to the war. Amy Tector counters,

Montgomery wanted to show the effects of the war on Canadians, but she was limited by the constraints of the Anne books. Rilla reflects Montgomery's struggle to chronicle the impact of the First World War within the expected parameters of the Anne series... far from being 'a chauvinistic tract,' the novel contains subversive elements that challenged contemporary attitudes to the war. (73)

Montgomery, like most Canadians, did not experience the First World War at a remove. She experienced it not from PEI but from Ontario. As a minister's wife, she was compelled to provide comfort and support for parishioners. Twenty-one young men from

the extended parish served in the war; six were killed. Montgomery and her husband, Ewen Macdonald, were active recruiters for the war effort. She dedicated *Rainbow Valley* (1919) to three young Leaskdale soldiers “who made the supreme sacrifice that the happy valleys of their home land might be kept sacred from the ravage of the invader” (iv). The war was immediate and personal.

Due to this personal involvement, Montgomery depicts a community traumatized by war but not ready to break with the ideological system that no longer ensures its protection and prosperity. In response to an angry letter from an anti-war reader, Montgomery wrote to Weber, “Can’t the poor moron realize the difference between offensive and defensive war. I wrote *Rilla* not to ‘glorify war’ but to glorify the courage and patriotism and self-sacrifice it evoked” (3: 387). While her journal and letters never express doubt about the value of the 60,000 Canadian war deaths, Montgomery’s fiction is more ambivalent. Walter Blythe, on the other hand, is certain of the value of his sacrifice:

I’ve helped to make Canada safe for the poets of the future. . . when the red rain of Langemarck and Verdun shall have brought forth a golden harvest—not in a year or two, as some foolishly think, but a generation later, when the seed sown shall have time to germinate and grow. (240-41)

Walter’s words are bitterly ironic to later readers because the seeds sown by the First World War, of course, would not come to fruition until the Second.

The novels of Duncan, Connor, and Montgomery are vital for understanding mainstream Canadian ideology in the early twentieth century. Each novelist is emblematic of Canada’s relationship to the metanarrative of militarism in the prewar,

war, and postwar eras. Duncan depicts how martial virtues remain just under the surface in times of supposed peace, ready to reemerge at a moment's notice. Connor shows these values in action, prompting otherwise ethical and good men to embrace violence and welcome death. Montgomery catches the torch in 1921 with *Rilla of Ingleside*. Though the novel seems to be about a community during wartime, it too is an examination of post-war consciousness, wherein society must make sense of a new set of paradigms. These novelists are not mercifully free of ghosts, as Birney might suggest. The vestiges of the previous century are a ubiquitous presence for Lorne Murchison, Barry Dunbar, and Rilla Blythe. The anti-war novels of the late 1920s recognize the remnants of the nineteenth century as anachronistic and strive to kill Romance with realism. In *Generals Die in Bed*, Charles Yale Harrison posits himself as the anti-Connor in the novel's opening pages. When a meek chaplain figure scolds the enlisted men for engaging in ribaldry, he is promptly dispatched by one of the men, "Shut up, Sky Pilot" (3).

Cannon Fodder: *Generals Die in Bed* and the Ethics of the Anti-War Novel

In summing up the twentieth century, philosopher Isaiah Berlin confessed, “I have lived through much of the twentieth century without, I must add, suffering personal hardship. I remember it only as the most terrible century in Western history” (qtd. in Hobsbawm 1). The French agronomist René Dumont saw the century “only as a century of massacres and wars.” William Golding could not help thinking of the twentieth century as the “most violent century in human history” (1). Eric Hobsbawm argues that the twentieth century did not begin until 1914 and the First World War represented the apocalyptic moment of transition into a new world. In reaction to the litany of war Romances that were published in the 1920s, *Generals Die in Bed* by Charles Yale Harrison was Canada’s first sincere attempt to come to terms with that reckoning.

When the markets crashed in 1929 and the world settled in for what would turn out to be a protracted economic depression, Romantic panegyrics to the glory of war that had so dominated the literary marketplace became untenable. It was only in the ideological vacuum created by the Great Depression that the Canadian anti-war novel was able to emerge as an antidote to the nationalist myth-making typified by Connor et al. Although some elements of Romance continue to endure into the 1930s, there is a definite shift in tone. There is a concerted effort by authors to represent the war as it was and to do so from the perspective of the average enlisted man. Harrison’s *Generals Die in Bed* is a blistering indictment of war as violent folly. Few novels match its intensity and its humanity.

Elsewhere, there had been disparate attempts to reconcile the unprecedented level of casualties with the entrenched ideology of the time. In 1922, two different approaches to the devastation of the First World War were published. One was T.S. Eliot's long poem *The Waste Land*, the other the British Army's *Report of the War Office Committee Enquiry into "Shell Shock."* Although Eliot's highly allusive *The Waste Land* could not be further removed stylistically from the British Army's *Report*, the two texts signal an important thematic consideration of the war and interwar years: the impulse to write about trauma as a means of coping. This impulse is no more evident than in the trench poetry of Owen and Sassoon, whose attempts to come to grips with their trauma manifest in surprising ways. Fussell argues that what distinguishes Owen's poetry is the presence of "the palpable body." Speaking of suffering is not enough; "one must see and feel the bloody head cradled dead on one's shoulder" (371). Eliot, on the other hand, in *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men," offers a representation of post-war Europe and the First World War's spiritual toll. In *Generals Die in Bed*, Harrison sought to marry the related impulses of Owen, Sassoon, and Eliot by honouring the fallen and striving for a new way forward.

Canadian writers, many of whom served at the front, were remarkably reticent to write about their experience until the end of the 1920s. This was a silence that was unique to Canada: "Canada had its share of Septimus Warren Smiths, the psychologically tortured veteran in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, but in the 1920s few in Canada heard their stories" (*Occupants of Memory* 84). In the immediate aftermath of the war, the United States and Great Britain saw the birth of a light industry built on the backs of memoirs, poems, and novels about the front. Naturally, there was a ready-made market eager to

read about this Great Moment that had defined their lives. Canada, at least in official discourse, chose to greet the armistice of November 11, 1918 with optimism. After all, Canada had acquitted itself well on the battlefield and gained a great deal of autonomy as a dominion, or so the official story goes.

After the Battle of the Somme in 1916, the reputation of the Canadian Corps as superior soldiers was firmly entrenched. British Prime Minister Lloyd George lauded Canadian soldiers for their contribution to the war effort: “The Canadians played a part of such distinction that thenceforward they were marked out as storm troops; for the remainder of the war they were brought along to head the assault in one great battle after another. Whenever the Germans found the Canadian Corps coming into the line they prepared for the worst” (qtd. in Cook 4). Coupled with the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge, which became a touchstone of Canadian pride with unparalleled rapidity, the First World War began to be spoken in terms of “Canada’s War of Independence” almost immediately. The fact that the British considered the victory at Vimy to be “minor” or that the soldiers witnessed unspeakable brutality at the front had little influence on the architects of this new Canadian nationalism. The sculptor Walter Allward was commissioned to design a mammoth memorial at Vimy Ridge, his process fictionally represented in Urquhart’s *The Stone Carvers*. Despite Allward’s attempts to craft a solemn and dignified memorial and not a monument to war, Prime Minister Arthur Meighen still stood on that hallowed land and invoked the language of glorious sacrifice, declaring that the lost had “sheathed in their hearts the sword of devotion, and now from oft-stricken fields they hold aloft its cross of sacrifice, mutely beckoning those who would share their immortality” (qtd. in Berton 110).

Time and time again, Canadian politicians and nationalists invoked the image of the soldier as saintly knight, akin to Connor's crusaders. When William Lyon Mackenzie King rechristened the Victoria Tower as the Peace Tower, he curiously recited "O Valiant Hearts" by John S. Arkwright:

O Valiant Hearts, who to your glory came
 Through dust of conflict and through battle-flame,
 Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
 Your memory hallowed in the Land you loved.

By the late 1920s, however, long-silent Canadian writers began to foment a literary backlash against this kind of national revisionism. Two other factors accounted for the public's shifting mood with regard to the war beside the frustration of veterans forced for too long to propagate a lie. The first was the simultaneous publication of both an English translation of Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* in 1929; both became instant bestsellers, providing a different view of the war for the vast majority of readers. The second factor was a libel suit brought by Sir Arthur Currie against the Port Hope *Evening Guide*, who had written that his mismanagement and arrogance had led to unnecessary death and suffering on the part of the Canadian soldiers. Although Currie saw this suit as a chance to clear his name, the days and days of testimony by Canadian enlisted men detailing their suffering did irreparable damage to his reputation and shifted the hearts and minds of many Canadians away from the war's official narrative. Fittingly, Currie's review of *Generals Die in Bed* was terse and dismissive: "There is not a single line in it worth reading" (Currie Papers).

Though perhaps late in arriving, the Canadian anti-war literary backlash was no less intense in its indictment of false idealism for the sake of nationalist myths.

Charles Yale Harrison was born into a Jewish family in Philadelphia on June 16, 1898. His family moved to Montreal shortly thereafter, and Harrison began his writing career, penning his first short story at the age of 15. By 16, he took an entry-level job at *The Montreal Star* with aspirations of becoming a journalist. At age 18, with war still raging in Europe, Harrison volunteered for Montreal's 244th Battalion (*Occupants of Memory* 88). As 1917 drew to a close, he arrived at the front in France late but did not participate in the war's most famous battles. He was present, however, for the Battle of Amiens on August 8, which spearheaded the hundred-day allied push that brought about the armistice of November 11, 1918. Like his protagonist in *Generals Die in Bed*, Harrison was injured in the foot on August 8 and watched the rest of the war from a hospital bed.

Back in Montreal, Harrison suffered from the effects of what would now be called post-traumatic stress disorder. He was severely depressed and became dependent on drugs and alcohol. As a means of recovery, he moved to New York to work as a journalist and became involved in socialist causes, though he never became a member of the Communist Party. His first slim book, *The Story of Greco and Carillo* (1927), was a Marxist critique of a famous murder trial. In 1928, as *Generals Die in Bed* was first being serialized in newspapers, he was arrested and jailed for three days by the Honduran government while en route to interview the anti-American dissident General Augusto Sandino. He spent his post-war life jumping from one controversy to another. He unsuccessfully brought suit against James Thurber for allegedly plagiarizing "The Secret

Life of Walter Mitty,” which he insisted was stolen from his own novel *Meet Me on the Barricades* (1937). A dedicated activist for social reform with strong anti-Stalin, pro-Trotsky leanings, he counted among his many admirers none other than John Dos Passos and ee cummings (*Occupants of Memory* 90).

Despite his polyglot interests, war remained the dominant theme of Harrison’s oeuvre after *Generals Die in Bed*. It is deployed with varying degrees of success in *A Child is Born* (1931), *There Are Victories* (1933), and *Meet Me on the Barricades*, Harrison’s only experimental work. The novel took James Joyce’s *Ulysses* as its model and followed the aimless narrative ramblings of a musician with the Spanish Civil War serving as background. The critical obscurity of Harrison’s first novel can be attributed less to its quality – *Generals Die in Bed* is among the best war novels written in Canada – than to the inability of its author to match the power of his debut.

For the architects of the literary backlash against the First World War’s glorification, such as Harrison, it was crucial to marry theme and form (as Montgomery almost did in *Rilla of Ingleside*). While Sinclair and Montgomery may have served as transitory figures bringing Canadian war writing from Romance to realism, it was the publication of *Generals Die in Bed* that marked a new stage in war writing. What is striking about the novel is its intensity and its commitment to veracity. Its episodic sketches of brutal frontline conditions, incompetence, and atrocities committed by Canadian soldiers were so controversial that the novel’s initial American publisher would not publish the book until Harrison signed a sworn affidavit attesting that the events described were true. For anti-war novelists, truth was paramount. It was their shield against criticism.

The novel is told through the perspective of an unnamed narrator. His anonymity heightens his everyman qualities and, more importantly, points to the interchangeability of the enlisted man. A superior tells the narrator, “all a soldier needed was a strong back and a weak mind” (73). Harrison adopts a fiercely cynical tone, which is so tinged with irony that the novel would lapse into satire if it were not so brutal. He saw the First World War as the nullification of the individual: “Out on rest we behaved like human beings; here we are merely soldiers” (49). There is little possibility for redemption: “We do not know what day it is. We have lost count. It makes no difference whether it is Sunday or Monday. It is merely another day – a day on which one may die” (14). It is within this nihilistic nightmare, however, that Harrison is able to levy his ethical critique. The soldiers of *Generals Die in Bed* operate under the quintessential moral constraints of any war, prevented by the nature of warfare from acting as ethically as they would in civilian life. In fact, they are obliged to act unethically. The trenches are no place for the chivalric knights invoked by Meighen and King. Harrison affords his characters the opportunity for small ethical rebellions. The rebellion for the enlisted soldiers of *Generals Die in Bed* manifests in two significant ways – anti-authoritarianism and Marxism.

The novel’s title anticipates its Marxism. Indeed, it neatly sums up the novel’s central theme – those in authority never bear the burden for the foolhardy endeavours they initiate. This dynamic is inherently Marxist. Being a soldier is work too, after all. There are a few idiosyncrasies unique to being a soldier besides the obvious physical danger. For one, it is one of the only jobs for which one can be conscripted. And, the soldier is obligated by law to obey the commands of his superior. For Harrison, an

avowed socialist and likely communist, the Marxist implications of this scenario are fraught to say the least.

In the little criticism available on the novel, much has been made of its Marxist leanings and its commitment to literary realism. Although these critical avenues do have significant merit, they fail to acknowledge Harrison's subtle representation of ethics and morality. In the muck and mire of the trenches, Harrison embeds a plea for making ethical choices under constraint. The soldiers of the novel fight against moral complacency and forge an ad hoc system of ethics. Unlike in Colin McDougall's *Execution*, where the soldiers tend to be represented as modern-day Abrahams striving for redemption, there is a reversal of roles: "Back home our lives were more or less our own - more or less, there we were factors on what we are doing. But here we are no more factors than was the stripling Isaac whom the hoary, senile Abraham led to the sacrificial block. But it is better not to think" (74).

Here, like many war authors, Harrison deploys the language of sacrifice. It was used sincerely by Ralph Connor and then ironically by later anti-war novelists. Several theorists throughout the twentieth century have attempted to come to terms with the connection between war and sacrifice. The same year *Generals Die in Bed* was published, Sigmund Freud wrote *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929) after learning about the full extent of the horrors of the First World War. He writes that the "human instinct of aggression and self-destruction" (92) cannot be explained away as a response to unsatisfied sexual desire. It is the violence of the First World War that prompts Freud to conceive of an aggressive instinct (Thanatos) that is distinct from the libido (eros). He discusses the fundamental irony surrounding the "legalized murder" of war. Ostensibly

fought to “protect civilization,” the First World War required soldiers to kill one another to preserve the kind of civilized society intended to prevent such murder.

In his book, *Violence and the Sacred* (1977), René Girard continues Freud’s work by constructing violence as a ritual process. Central to Girard’s theory is the close connection between violence and sacrifice. He argues that First World War writers rationalize their participation in violent acts by constructing the soldier as a sacrificial victim of forces beyond his power. If the soldier can be constructed as a passive sacrificial victim, then it is possible for him to sublimate any acknowledgment of his active participation in the killing: “this mystification of the soldier is not necessarily a deplorable form of hypocrisy or (culpable) blindness; on the contrary, as a reading of Girard makes clear, it could be interpreted as a desirable form of restraint on violence” (Cobley “Violence and Sacrifice in Modern War Narratives” 76). This reading finds corroboration in *Generals Die in Bed*. The soldiers continue to see themselves as Isaacs but this identification does not result in an obfuscation of personal responsibility. If anything, their powerlessness serves only to compound their collective guilt. Despite what Girard suggests, the soldiers’ lack of agency provides little comfort.

What does seem to provide comfort is the notion that, in exposing the truth about the war, First World War novelists are paying tribute to their comrades in arms. Remarque dedicates *All Quiet on the Western Front* to “a generation which was destroyed by the war – even when it escaped its grenades” (i). Gestures like this would become problematic to critics like Cobley: “the commemorative gesture thus finds itself compelled to name the unnameable again and again” (*Representing War* 9). Despite her qualms, there is a unique quality to the war novels written by veterans, defined by their

proximity to the experience, which would prove impossible to replicate in subsequent decades. The Canadian veterans, like Harrison, who chose to write about their experience, were of a generation for whom death became commonplace yet their sympathy for the enlisted man does not waver and is not restricted by geographic boundaries. Like Remarque, Harrison's dedication is universal in scope: "To the bewildered youths – British, Australian, Canadian, and German – who were killed in that wood a few miles beyond Amiens on August 8th, 1918, I DEDICATE THIS BOOK" (i). The tension between commemoration and realism informs the existential underpinnings of many anti-war novels.

In *Generals Die in Bed*, one of the most defiant acts of the soldiers is their refusal to hate the enemy. Earlier Canadian novels display an intense hatred for the "Hun." Even *Rilla of Ingleside* includes an overwrought discussion of atrocities committed by the Germans: "When I heard the doctor reading about them bayoneting the babies... I was stirring the soup when that thought came to me and I just felt that if I could have lifted that saucepan full of that boiling soup and thrown it at the Kaiser I would not have lived in vain" (56).

This kind of anti-German sentiment was not uncommon during the First World War. Although German-Canadians were Canada's third largest cultural grouping at the time, anti-German prejudice was bolstered and perpetuated by a report commissioned in 1914 by Lord Bryce's Committee to Investigate Alleged German Outrages. The report detailed a variety of abuses committed by German soldiers, including the bayoneting of babies in Belgium. The report was a harrowing and disturbing account of German atrocities and war crimes. It was, however, almost entirely fictional: "The Bryce

Report... as is now generally acknowledged, was largely a tissue of invention, unsubstantiated observations by unnamed witnesses, and second-hand eyewitness reports depending far more on imagination than any other factor. There was no attempt at scholarly investigation and evaluation of the evidence” (Buitenhuis 27). During the war, most Canadians, including war novelists, took the Bryce commission at face value. German-Canadians would be stripped of their civil rights, including the right to vote, before the war was over.

Ralph Connor, in particular, took the Bryce report at its word and, in his novels, represented all things German as evil and monstrous. In *Sky Pilot*, one character sums up the German soldiers as “baby-killing, woman-raping devils” (198). In *The Major*, the protagonist essentially advocates genocide: “I have come to see that there is no possibility of peace or sanity for the world till that race of mad militarists is destroyed. I am still a pacifist, but, thank god, no longer a fool” (370). Connor’s anti-German obsession persisted well into the 1920s when it ought to have abated somewhat. The atrocities described in the Bryce report had been largely debunked after the war. Romance needs a villain and, thanks to the Bryce report, Germans filled the role well. The death of ambiguity, and the perpetuation of a constant juxtaposition of good and evil, are central to the preservation of Romance. As Northrop Frye writes,

Romance 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... [Romance] relieves us from the strain of trying to be fair minded, as we see particularly in melodrama, where we not only

have outright heroism and villainy but are expected to take sides, applauding one and hissing the other. (50)

The depiction of German characters, Canadian Romances of the First World War reveal, is less an attempt at historical verisimilitude and more a rhetorical strategy to establish a polarization of characterization wherein Canadian soldiers are figured as Crusaders repelling an abhorrent other.

Harrison's representation of the enemy is diametrically opposed to previous novels. He dedicates the novel not only to Canadian, British, and Australian forces but to German soldiers as well. In her *Representing War: Form and Ideology in First World War Narratives*, Cobley issues a critique of this type of "commemorative gesture." She investigates the way in which "modes of representation generate critiques of the war which nevertheless remain complicitous with the Enlightenment values which the experience of war can do nothing but undermine" (3), and she analyzes five novels of the First World War to show how their formal properties derive from conservative ideological assumptions which contradict the authors' overtly radical critique of the war and the cultural values that sustained it. For Cobley, the First World War represented a "crisis in consciousness which accelerated the shift from modernity to postmodernity." Although Cobley believes this attitude to be "generally acknowledged," *Generals Die in Bed* resists this interpretation.

Harrison's dedication, for instance, is a deliberate attempt to circumvent the nationalist bent of the previous generation of war writers. For him, the German soldier, like the Canadian and British soldier, is caught up in a hellish and meaningless conflict far outside his purview where decisions are made well above his pay grade. The narrator

notes that the Canadian soldiers never “refer to the Germans as our enemy... Instead, we call him Heine and Fritz. The nearest we get to unfriendly is when we call him ‘square-head’” (23). The Canadian soldiers even develop camaraderie with their German counterparts. There is historical precedent for this type of kinship. The most famous example is the Christmas truce of 1914, where opposing forces would meet in No Man’s Land to exchange gifts and even play soccer. For those in authority, however, dualism is a strategic necessity. “One of the legacies of the war,” according to Fussell, is “this habit of simple distinction, simplification, and opposition. If truth is the main casualty in war, ambiguity is another” (77). Harrison reconfigures what Fussell terms the “versus habit” – a “self-other/us-them” mentality that was pervasive in Romantic war literature before the late 1920s. As Fussell points out:

The mode of gross dichotomy came to dominate perception and expression elsewhere, encouraging finally what we can call the modern versus habit: one thing opposed to another, not with some Hegelian hope of synthesis involving a dissolution of both extremes (that would suggest “a negotiated peace,” which is anathema), but with a sense that one of the poles embodies so wicked a deficiency or flaw or perversion that its total submission is called for. (77)

The Canadian soldiers of *Generals Die in Bed* reject the clean dichotomy of the modern “versus habit.” The novel, despite Cobley’s misgivings, is in line with Fussell’s framework. As the Canadian soldiers pass an encampment of German prisoners, they are overcome not with hate but with empathy, “We pass an encampment for war prisoners. The emaciated looking Germans stand looking, as silent and motionless as owls. One of them waves his hand at us as we ride past. We wave back at them. We throw them

cigarettes and cans of bully beef” (85). They share a moment of recognition of the victimhood of the enlisted man on both sides. Synthesis is achieved.

In war, the camaraderie between antagonists is tenuous at best. Eventually, the soldier must meet his double on the field of battle. This happens in one of the novel’s most harrowing scenes. Those who attack *Generals Die in Bed* as overly-nihilistic tend to quote this passage: “We know what soldiering means. It means saving your own skin and getting a bellyful as often as possible . . . that and nothing else. *Camaraderie--esprit de corps--good fellowship--these are words for journalists to use, not for us. Here in the line they do not exist. We fight among ourselves*” (49). Webb points out, however, that what is often overlooked is the “humanity of a character who claims to be cynical, yet acts compassionately and selflessly. . . . To say the narrator (and by extension Harrison) is cynical is to ignore the numerous ways in which the novel reflects the survival of humanity amid war’s chaos” (95). If, as the narrator insists, there is no camaraderie among soldiers, there is certainly some among labourers.

Though fellow labourers trapped by a meaningless cycle of mechanized death, German and Canadian soldiers are compelled to kill one another. One of the novel’s most memorable sections details a brutal raid on a German trench. Despite the comradeship the narrator may feel, he rises to the task when called: “I am filled with a frenzied hatred for these men. They want to kill me but I will stay here and shoot at them until I am either shot or stabbed down. I grit my teeth.” In order to do so, however, he must, at least temporarily, deny his humanity: “We are snarling, savage beasts” (108). On the raid, the narrator stabs a German soldier named Karl with his bayonet. This act brings him face to face with the enemy for the first time:

Behind our lines the guns light the sky with monster dull red flashes. In this flickering light this German and I enact our tragedy.

I move to seize the butt of my rifle. Once more we are face to face. He grabs the barrel with a childish movement which seems to say: You may not take it, it is mine. I push his hands away. I pull again.

My tugging and pulling works the blade in his insides.

Again those horrible shrieks!

I place the butt of the rifle under my arm and turn away, trying to drag the blade out. It will not come. (63)

Unable to extricate his blade from the German's ribcage, the narrator must fire his weapon to break free. This moment is significant because the soldier cannot help but see his own plight in the scared face of his German counterpart. The situation could just as likely have been reversed. Whatever semblance of dualism the narrator has been maintaining fades away. When, by coincidence, the narrator takes Karl's brother hostage, the young man's panicked grief, "*Mein Bruder – eine minute – meine Bruder,*" prevents the narrator from suppressing his pre-wartime ethics. When the narrator returns with his prisoner, he insists that they "be treated nicely" (66). Karl's brother thanks the narrator and says, "Du bist ein guter soldat" (67). Of course, the narrator does not believe him.

After the incident with Karl and his brother, the narrator is wracked with guilt during his time on leave in London. The narrator cannot shake the sense of culpability about Karl's death. Like Woolf's Septimus Smith, he believes that he has committed a crime and is incapable of equivocating by invoking clichéd platitudes so common in war. In London, he befriends a prostitute named Gladys to whom he confesses, "I am a

criminal. Did I ever tell you that I committed murder?" (95). This statement takes Gladys aback. When the narrator clarifies that the "murder" he committed was of an enemy in the trenches, Gladys is relieved, "You silly boy. I thought you had really murdered someone" (95). For Gladys, there is a distinct difference between killing in wartime and killing in peacetime. Her distinction is a common one and, indeed, one upon which the entire cosmology of wartime ethics rests. She is representative of the beliefs of those who had not been to the front and, therefore, remain comforted by a black-and-white ethical world.

Gladys's profession is written in terms of the wartime efforts. Sex work was a reality of wartime London. Although it has certainly persisted in London for centuries, the influx of lonely, scared, and temporarily rich soldiers made for an eager clientele, and this situation resulted in greater supply. Tim Cook quotes one Canadian soldier, "The brutalizing influence of militarism tends to lower the best of men. Add to this the absence of church life, home life, wives, mothers and sweethearts and the wonder isn't that so many fall but that any go straight at all" (175). Canadians had among the highest rates for venereal disease in the British Expeditionary Force, with 28.7% infected by war's end. In the entire British army, VD caused 416, 891 hospital admissions (176).

Despite these statistics, cultural memory of the First World War has made little room for sex. In discussions of the First World War, it is rare to hear mention of the lingerie prints by Raphael Kirchner that were a fixture of the dugouts or the so-called Khaki-Fever that swept the young female populace when in the presence of a man in uniform. For instance, nearly everyone has heard of Trench Foot and its symptoms have become synonymous with the squalor of trench warfare. Yet, only 74,711 cases of Trench

Foot were treated during the entire war (and this number includes those treated for frostbite). Although a man was five times more likely to be admitted to the hospital for syphilis and gonorrhea than he was for Trench Foot, in the popular imagination it is Trench Foot that persists.

This prudery is a modern development. The British Army was well aware of what happened when its enlisted men were on leave but its policy towards hiring sex workers vacillated between crude pragmatism and naïve idealism. A consistent policy was never fully delineated. When a British soldier was deployed to the Front in 1914, he was given a short message folded into his Pay Book written by Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener: “In this new experience you may find temptations both in wine and women. You must entirely resist both” (Arthur 27). There was conspicuously little instruction as to how this was to be accomplished. Private Frank Richards, in his memoirs, responded to Kitchener’s edict: “They may as well have not been issued at all for all the notice we took of them” (Makepeace 67). The British army encouraged abstinence but there was no punishment for contracting VD, only for concealing it. The stifling silence surrounding the issue is represented in Canadian veteran W. Redvers Dent’s short story “The Original,” first published in a 1930 issue of the pulp magazine *Adventure*:

“There’s one man I would like to report sick, sir.”

Again they exchanged glances.

“There are a few others in other platoons; I will tell the M.O. [Medical Officer] about it and get them sent to field ambulances.” (22)

Though it remains unsaid, it is clear from context clues that the soldiers are discussing venereal disease. “Rouen has been ruinous to my purse (not to mention my morals),”

wrote Lt. James H. Butlin, “but I have enjoyed myself” (69). Brothels were easily identifiable by their red lamps. Queues and crowds of men were usually seen milling about outside. Corporal Jack Wood described the scene as “a crowd, waiting for a cup tie at a football final in Blighty” (71).

In her article, “Male Heterosexuality and Prostitution During The Great War,” Clare Makepeace identifies the two primary motivations for soldiers who chose to frequent brothels. The British Army chose to turn a blind eye to brothel visits because of a prevalent belief that it was unhealthy for men, especially married ones, to abstain from sex for too long. Rather than as a means of satisfying a physiological impulse, however, soldiers’ letters and memoirs reveal that they visited sex workers either as a reward for surviving battle or as a means of escape from a culture of imminent death. Second Lieutenant Dennis Wheatley asked: “Why should a man who had been deprived of women for possibly many months and might be dead within a week, be denied a little fun?” (69). Canadian novels of the First World War confirm this view and add an element not discussed by Makepeace – the desire of Canadian soldiers to forge a proxy domestic space overseas, the desire for the comforts of home. As ubiquitous as khaki, sex workers are a recurring trope¹ in Canadian war fiction. They are rarely singled out for derision and, in fact, are acknowledged to play a vital role in the war effort.

One Canadian soldier described English women as “snakes from hell with fire in their mouth all over” (Cook 176). Significantly, however, the more prurient aspects of

¹ A non-comprehensive list of Canadian war texts that feature and/or mention sex workers: *All Else is Folly* by Peregrine Acland (1929), *Generals Die in Bed* by Charles Yale Harrison (1930), “The Original” by W. Redvers Dent (1930), *God’s Sparrow* by Philip Child (1937), *Execution* by Colin McDougall (1958), *The Wars* by Timothy Findley (1977), *Broken Ground* by Jack Hodgins (1998), *Three Day Road* by Joseph Boyden

their job are deemphasized in favour of praising their domesticating prowess. Canadian novelists tend to deemphasize mercenary encounters and depict more domestic affairs that almost resemble courtship. Performative courtship best describes the relationship between Alec Falcon, the protagonist of Peregrine Acland's *All Else is Folly* (1929), and his temporary paramour Myra. The novel's epigraph from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, "Man shall be trained for war, and woman for the recreation of the warrior; all else is folly" (Acland vi), espouses an essentialist view of gender which the rest of the novel never fulfills. Falcon, whose name reveals his status as authorial stand-in, has been traumatized by his experience in France but hopes to convalesce while on leave in London. The woman he loves remains aloof because her husband is a prisoner in Germany. Although her husband is an abusive alcoholic, she remains faithful to him out of obligation and guilt. Falcon, therefore, is alone and set adrift in London. In an attempt to cheer himself up, he watches a musical comedy, the spectacle only making him more miserable: "To go through all those months in the trenches – for this!" (184).

Falcon is able to find a measure of respite only with a woman. He meets Myra at the Prince Rupert Lounge, where "most of the women wore too much make-up... But not much more than their non-professional sisters" (185). Indeed, a large part of Myra's appeal is her ability to seem like a "normal woman." She is a Russian ex-art student whose lover was killed in the war. She is vehemently anti-war: "Myra surprised Alec by the bitterness of her passion against war. The natural consequence, perhaps, of the loss of her lover" (190). Falcon, himself increasingly disillusioned with fighting, is smitten: "He had discovered in himself a great liking for Myra—this girl who lived outside the conventions, who saw life only in terms of passion" (191). Although they make love, in

his descriptions of their congress Acland resorts to an unconvincing sentimentality that is entirely out of character considering the realist aspirations of the rest of the novel:

Mutely, she told of the rhythm that sways the vast, slow-moving seas.

Fiercely, she showed him the fire that whirls the stars in their courses.

Limply, she lay when the last wave of passion had burst like a breaker assaulting a cliff, ascending to heaven ... falling. (192)

Acland's seeming inability to describe sex might indicate that the crux of Myra and Falcon's relationship does not rest in their sexual chemistry. Myra redeems an otherwise torturous leave with companionship and compassion. She affords Falcon the domesticity he craves. She says, "I am young, I am full of vitality. I don't know that I could use it better than by giving a few hours of pleasure to some officer home, tired, from the trenches" (189). Their relationship is the performance of courtship wherein Myra stands in for Falcon's real love and Falcon plays the role of her deceased lover.

Although their relationship is predicated on something other than mere transactional sex, Myra is still a sex worker and needs to be paid. This too, however, is filtered through several layers of performance. First, Myra refuses payment. When Falcon insists and produces a roll of cash, Myra's adeptness with handling paper money momentarily punctures the veil of the domestic scene she has created:

Myra laughed at him.

"The more you hurry, the slower you are," she said – "and you trying to catch a train. Here, give them to me. My fingers are quick."

Too quick, thought Alec, as he watched her dexterously strip off not five notes, but eight... (194)

The conclusion of Myra and Falcon's relationship is inevitable, and Falcon's brief reprieve from the horrors of the trenches is partially marred by the expedient nature of their parting. Nevertheless, Acland depicts a relationship between soldier and sex worker that is something other than what the Lord Kitcheners of the world could conceive. Falcon and Myra are two people in an extreme situation who were in a unique position to help one another.

This dynamic recurs in *Generals Die in Bed* as the narrator parades down Montreal's Ste. Catherine Street before his regiment is shipped to Europe, it is a sex worker who provides him with comfort: "All day long the military police had been rounding up our men in saloons, in brothels. We are heroes, and the women are hysterical now that we are leaving" (17). As he makes his way to Bonaventure Station, "A befurred young woman puts her soft arm around my neck and kisses me. She smells of perfume. After the tense excitement of the day it is delightful... I do not want to go to war" (17). Though their encounter is fleeting, the woman comes to symbolize home for the soldier and his life before the war, "I am only eighteen and I have not had any experiences with women like this. I like this girl's brazenness. She is the last link between what I am leaving and the war" (17).

On leave in London, Gladys is "that delightful combination of wife, mother, and courtesan – and I, a common soldier on leave, have her!" (94). The Freudian implications are obvious: "She does not call me by name but uses 'boy' instead. I like it. In a dozen different ways she makes me happy" (94). The physical act of sex is barely mentioned. Instead, Gladys satisfies his other non-carnal needs: "There is a glorious breakfast on the table, grilled bacon, crisp and brown, two fried eggs, a pot of marmalade, a mound of

toast, golden yellow and brown, and tea. I fall to. Gladys looks on approvingly. How well this woman understands what a lonely soldier on leave requires” (93-94). For Gladys, sex work is the performance of domesticity: “She is a capable cook, and delights in showing me that her domestic virtues are as great as her amorous ones. I do not gainsay either” (94). When he must leave to return to the front, Gladys asks through weepy eyes, “Have you been happy, my boy?” (97). Although she likely adopted her profession out of financial necessity, she still sees herself, quite rightly, as an important part of the war effort. She shows kindness to the soldiers during their rare moments of respite.

Indicative of the persistent schism between the front and the home-front, the proxy space created by Gladys inevitably becomes untenable and the relationship between soldier and prostitute in Canadian war fiction serves as a crucial tool for understanding the fraught relationship between the soldier and the home-front and vice versa. Still on leave in London, the protagonist is taken by Gladys to a show to distract him. Rather than providing him an escape, the spectacle serves only to alienate him from the non-military population. As the burlesque dancers sing an up-tempo version of “Oh, It’s a Lovely War” in front of the Union Jack, Gladys and the rest of the audience erupt in cheers and applause. The narrator, however, feels miserable. Gladys suggests that perhaps those cheering are searching for a means of escape. The narrator is incredulous and shouts out, “These people have no right to laugh... They have no business to forget. They should be made to remember” (89). His protests fall on deaf ears and those who do hear dismiss his outburst as evidence that he is “shell-shocked” (90). Gladys admonishes that he’s “spoiling [his] leave. Can’t you forget the front for the few days you have before you?” (91). The narrator cannot forget, and the disparity between propaganda and

experience manifests in hatred for those not at the front. The narrator is grateful for the break Gladys has given him, but the disparity between propaganda and reality reveals the pretence of their domesticity, and he returns to the front as cynical as ever. Major George McFarland likely summed up the narrator's feelings when he said, "I realized bitterly the truth of the old saying that the man who is most in need of leave is the man who has just had it" (Cook 178).

The transition from Romance to realism is cemented when the narrator visits Westminster Abbey. He is drawn into a conversation with an Anglican parson, another allusion to the "fighting parson" trope popular in Connor's novels. The parson perpetuates obsolete Victorian clichés about the heroic nature of war: "the best thing about the war, to my way of thinking, is that it has brought out the most heroic qualities in the common people, positively noble qualities" (96). Rather than immediately rebuke him, the narrator lets him drone on about the admirable qualities war brings out in its participants: "I feel that it would be useless to tell him of Brownie, of how Karl died, of the snarling fighting among our own men over a crust of bread" (96). The exchange between the parson and the narrator, further proving the schism between military and civilian experience, is also indicative of the novel's unrepentant anti-authoritarianism. Religion provides no more structure, guidance, or relief than does the military. They are both cogs in a machine that serves national and commercial interest.

If the Germans are not the enemy, then who is? The narrator is clear on that matter: "We have learned who our enemies are--the lice, some of our officers, and Death" (23). Death is certainly difficult to rebel against, though surviving is first and foremost in the minds of the soldiers. Lice loom large in *Generals Die in Bed* and controlling them is

near impossible despite some colourful attempts: “We are supposed to be resting, but rest is impossible; we are being eaten alive by lice. We cannot sleep for them... Our rambling conversation is interrupted by sharp little cracks as we crush the vermin between our thumbnails. A tiny drop of blood spurts in one’s face as they are crushed” (15). How the soldiers interact with the third enemy, the officers, is another indication of the novel’s abiding anti-authoritarianism.

The novel’s distrust of authority is intransigent. Any figure in authority is ultimately revealed to be incompetent or cruel or both. The meanness of military bureaucracy is encompassed in the character of Clark, “an Imperial, and Englishman, [who] glories in his authority” (37). He is another version of Sassoon’s “The General”:

‘Good-morning; good-morning!’ the General said
 When we met him last week on our way to the line.
 Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of ’em dead,
 And we’re cursing his staff for incompetent swine.
 ‘He’s a cheery old card,’ grunted Harry to Jack
 As they slogged up to Arras with rifle and pack.

But he did for them both by his plan of attack. (1961-2)

It goes without saying that the military adheres to a profoundly hierarchal structure. The enlisted men are keenly aware of their position: “What the hell did you think this was--a privates’ war? Listen, brother, all we gotta do is fight it. That’s all” (151). Clark is the epitome of a sadistic middle manager who is obsessed with keeping up appearances: he is “tall and blonde and takes insufferable pride in his uniform” (19). He is so cruel and

indifferent to the enlisted men under him that one soldier, Brown, vows to “kill the bastard—that’s what I’ll do. I’m just waiting until we get into a real scrap. I’ll plug the son-of-a-bitch between the shoulder blades” (20). It turns out to be another soldier, Fry, who does just that: “Fry reaches into his holster with his left hand. He fires at the officer’s back. Clark sags to the bottom of the trench with a look of wonder in his face” (113). Fry’s rebellion does not last long as, moments later, he too is killed by shell fire. His short-lived success and the continued incompetence of the officers, even after Clark’s murder, indicate that, “authority for all its abuses is invincible to the worker-soldier” (*Occupants of Memory* 99).

Although the Marxist revolution depicted in *Generals Die in Bed* may not be successful, Harrison portrays an arc wherein the soldiers become aware of the forces that brought them to France. The soldiers of *Generals Die in Bed* are keenly aware of the cultures of militarization present in capitalist society that render war inevitable. One scene, in particular, anticipates what the American President Dwight D. Eisenhower would later describe as the Military Industrial Complex, the growing fusion between corporations, the State and the armed forces. As the soldiers watch an ammunition truck burn, they have this exchange, which is worth quoting at length:

“They say those ‘coalbox’ shells cost five thousand dollars each.”

“Can you imagine what a little barrage costs, then?”

We lapse into silence as we try to calculate the possible cost of a preliminary bombardment. After a while someone says in an awed voice:

“Millions, I guess.”

“Then what must a scrap like Passchendaele cost? They were hammering away there for months. First the Belgians tried to take it, then the Imperials, then the Anzacs, and then we did. They must've fired millions of shells...”

This problem in mathematics is too much for us. If one twelve-inch shell costs five thousand dollars, then a major battle must cost--it is too much . . .

“I bet that dump going up over there must cost a billion dollars.”

“And I'll bet somebody is making a profit on those shells whether they are fired at the Germans or whether they just blow up...”

“Sure they do.”

...

“Sure, and I'll bet that *those* people don't want the war to end in a hurry.”

“Course not.”

“At Étaples when I was goin' on my leave I heard a *madame* in an *estaminet* say she hoped the war never ended--with her getting' five francs for a bottle of vinegar what she called *vin blanc*. Why should she?”

“All of us wish the war was over, but believe me, there's plenty that don't.” (120-121)

Though the mathematics may prove to be too much for them, the soldiers begin to understand how powerful and varied the forces are that draw countries into wars. In relation to the billions of dollars in play, their lives are insignificant. It is this awareness of militarism's hold on culture that differentiates Harrison's novel from his Romantic forebears. Recognition of their insignificance, however, does not preclude the soldiers from carrying out acts of subversion.

The most sustained act of disobedience on the part of the beleaguered Canadian infantry is the looting of Arras. Discipline vanishes completely and the Canadian soldiers seek to take revenge on the wealthy citizens of Arras as surrogates for the officers to whom their aggression is really directed. One recruit practices his aim on fine china. Another throws a rock through a store window to retrieve cigarettes. There is no consensus whether this episode actually happened. Some historians accept Harrison's account as a dramatized event that more or less took place. Others, like Jonathan Vance, maintain that the story is a fabrication.

True or not, this episode highlights Harrison's distrust of conventional heroism. This scene hardly casts the Canadian soldiers in the best light. It is a radically different representation than Connor's Muscular Christians. The relatively minor looting of Arras is important, however, because it constitutes the extent to which Marxist revolution will be tolerated in the unique ethical environment of the military. While the looting allows the soldiers to indulge in another instance of Bakhtinian carnivalesque abandon (in a scene equally reminiscent of *The Imperialist* and Roch Carrier's *La Guerre! Yes Sir!*), the freedom it affords is temporary; it is not even entirely clear if hierarchy is being subverted at all: "the officers are as drunk as we are" (130). When night comes the soldiers reminisce about the spoils of their looting:

Two guys got into a cellar that had one of those big vats... they turned on the faucet and started to drink out of their mess-tins... got so drunk that they forgot to turn it off after a while... when we looked through the trap door this morning they were floating in about five feet of wine ... God, who would've thought that

plain gravel-crushers like us would ever get rich pickins like this... the soldier's dream come true, all right, all right. (131)

The anarchy and vandalism of the looting eventually die down, and the soldiers wake up with "champagne hangovers" (130). Without much consternation, military order is restored: "Men are rounded up. We have had our fill. Companies are reorganized. MPs patrol the streets" (131). Though the bacchanal display at Arras is ultimately short-lived and the stultifying rigidity of military experience must be restored, the looting, however selfish, is an anti-authoritarian act of rebellion. What would be nothing more than petty crime in civilian life is transformed into an act of courage because it allows the soldiers to exert an aspect of their humanity, however unsavoury.

After this brief interlude, military order is reestablished. A Brigadier-General gives a highly propagandistic speech to the soldiers detailing how German U-boats illegally sank a British hospital ship called the *Llandoverly Castle*. For the second time in the novel, the term "murder" is invoked. The General encourages his men to "avenge the lives of their murdered comrades" (138). The commanding officer reads from the press release about the incident:

And after the *Llandoverly Castle* was torpedoed, not a helping hand was offered to our wounded comrades... no instance of barbarism in the world's history can equal the sinking of this hospital ship... think of it, more than three hundred wounded Canadians struggling in the choppy waters of the English Channel... the lifeboats were sprayed by machine-gun fire as the nurses appealed in vain to the laughing men on the U-boat... the amputation cases went to the bottom

instantly... they couldn't swim, poor chaps... the salt water added to their dying agony. (137)

For the enlisted men, it is “easy to believe this story” (138). A Colonel who takes a pragmatic approach to the situation further incites them to violence: “I’m not saying for you not to take prisoners. That’s against international rules. All that I’m saying is that if you take any we’ll have to feed ‘em out of our rations” (138). The result of these speeches is that in August 1918, Canadian soldiers massacred hundreds of unarmed Germans soldiers trying to surrender to them:

We bring our rifles to our hips, half on guard.

The figures run with funny jerky steps towards us, holding their hands high above their heads.

We open rifle fire as we advance. The silhouettes begin to topple over. It is just like target practice.

There are hundreds of them. They are unarmed. They open their mouths wide as though they are shouting something of great importance. The rifle fire drowns out their words. Doubtless they are asking for mercy. We do not heed. We are avenging the sinking of the hospital ship. We continue to fire. (143)

Like the looting at Arras, the massacre at Amiens is highly contested. Although it does not cohere with official military documents, there is significant evidence that Harrison did not make it up; the truth of what happened will likely never be certain. The ruthlessness of the Canadian soldier in this scene may have been the final nail in the coffin of Canadian war Romance. It is difficult to reconcile the propagandistic ideal of the morally forthright Canadian soldier with the war crimes Harrison describes:

They throw themselves into the crater of a shell hole. They cower there. Some of our men walk to the lip of the hole and shoot into the huddled mass of Germans. Clasped hands are held up from out of the funnel-shaped grave. The hands shake eloquently asking for pity. There is none. Our men shoot into the crater. In a few seconds only a squirming mass is left. (144)

Bolstered by the Bryce Report, the Romances of Ralph Connor and Lucy Maud Montgomery helped to entrench a certain image of Germans into the Canadian imagination. Propaganda so demonized the “merciless Hun” that, “everything attaching to such creatures was grotesque and inhuman” (Fussell 78). Webb writes that Harrison “inverts this conventional dichotomy: instead of noble Canadians fighting the merciless Hun, the Canadians are aggressors against an unarmed opponent... ‘we’ not ‘they’ are degenerate” (*Occupants of Memory* 104).

At the novel’s end, the narrator is wounded in the foot; he is happy because his war is over. As he is being transported away, an orderly disabuses him of the official justification for the massacre. The Llandoverly Castle was transporting not wounded soldiers but supplies. The orderly reassures him that he need not worry about his own boat being attacked, “You’re lucky... this one is only carryin’ wounded” (152). The novel ends with the narrator again wracked with guilt: “I remember the funny jerky steps of the prisoners as they came running towards us with their hands held high above their heads--I see the clasped hands lifted over the lip of the shell hole as we fired into it-- clasped hands silently asking for pity” (152). His literal war may be over but what he did in Amiens will be with him always and the silent war of post-traumatic stress disorder has just begun.

Generals Die in Bed continually brushes up against the accepted narrative of Canada in the Great War. Gone are the virtuous knights of chivalry evoked by King and Meighen and gone are Ralph Connor's crusaders. In their place are shock troops that squabble amongst themselves over scraps of bread and are capable of unspeakably violent and criminal acts. Though the novel is undoubtedly cynical, Harrison does not entirely rob the enlisted men of their humanity. The novel posits that adhering to Immanuel Kant's golden rule is impossible within the strict confines of the military. The soldiers, however, do not regress into ethical laziness. They are able to rebel against the mechanized death of the First World War through a series of small rebellions, which manifest in the refusal to equivocate over whether or not killing in wartime is murder, in the recognition of the deep-seeded connections between war and commerce, and the bacchanal looting of Amiens. Despite these rebellions, military order is never really threatened. There is little hope of redemption. The Canadian soldiers remain the Isaac to the state's Abraham. It would take the existentialism of Colin McDougall's *Execution* for that power dynamic to be inverted.

CHAPTER TWO

The Pilgrim and the Prophet: Canadian Second World War Fiction and Midcentury

Existentialism

The Canadian anti-war novel, typified by *Generals Die in Bed*, sought to dismantle the self-conscious reinvention of Canadian identity in the wake of the First World War.

Despite the efforts of anti-war writers to puncture the image of the Canadian soldier as saintly knight, writers in the 1940s returned to war fiction as the terrain upon which their vision of Canada and Canadians could be realized. Perhaps the outbreak of the Second World War meant that critiques of the Canadian soldier had to recede for its duration.

The most enduring Canadian war novel to espouse this new nationalism is Hugh MacLennan's *Barometer Rising* (1941). In this novel, MacLennan dismisses Harrison's skepticism about the impact of the First World War on Canada in favour of a conservative reaffirmation of Canadian First World War mythology. For MacLennan, the First World War was the means by which Canada's status as a "chosen nation" was revealed. The novel's plot synthesizes the standard developmental view of nationalism and history, wherein the nation's "individual progress and interaction with other nations is made narrative, and that narrative is implanted and cultivated so as to edify, to validate, and to inspire" (Gordon 61). In such a paradigm, figuring war as a necessary stage in a nation's "life" is inevitable. *Barometer Rising* and even *The Watch that Ends the Night* (1959) engage in that most MacLennan of pursuits: the promotion and consolidation of Canadian identity.

MacLennan's main literary mission was to advance Canadian national progress. Surprisingly, he often wrote negatively of nationalism in general, calling it an "aberration

of the religious impulse” (*Cross Country* 141). Yet, many of his characters come to exemplify just this aberration. Neil Macrae represents Canada’s potential as a nation if it is able to distinguish itself from the Empire. The Canadian relationship to the British Empire is personified in the town of Halifax: “For it was her birthright to serve England in time of war and to sleep neglected when there was peace. It was a bondage Halifax had no thought of escaping... for the town figured more largely in the calamities of the British Empire than in its prosperities” (51). For Marlene Goldman, the threat to Halifax in *Barometer Rising* is a “relatively straightforward apocalyptic [narrative]” (7). The novel treats trauma and calamity in a way not at all uncommon to a developmental nationalist narrative: “*Barometer Rising* dramatizes the Halifax Explosion of 1917 (the most devastating explosion before Hiroshima) as a momentous, apocalyptic event necessary if Canada was to leave behind its past as a British colony and move into the future as an autonomous nation” (7).

MacLennan’s emphasis on the collective over the personal means that his soldiers are rarely afforded any nuance. They are simply ideological types through which MacLennan can level a wider nationalist critique. Neil, a Canadian Odysseus disguised as a soldier returning to Halifax, is MacLennan’s mouthpiece:

For almost the first time in his life, he fully realized what being a Canadian meant... this nation undiscovered by the rest of the world and unknown to itself, these people neither American nor English, nor even sure what they wanted to be, this unborn mightiness, this question mark, this future for himself, and for God knew how many millions of mankind! (102)

Some critics read *Barometer Rising*'s representation of the Halifax explosion as signaling a startling shift from late-Victorian certainty to Modern irony. Robert D. Chambers, however, dismisses the notion that MacLennan was an emissary of Canadian modernism, writing that his view of history was "overlaid with a sense of inevitability" (61). George Woodcock considers MacLennan to be the inheritor of a classical tradition whose "heyday in England ended with the Georgians" (14). For MacLennan, the war and the Halifax explosion is not a sign that the world was slouching towards Eliot's Waste Land, but as a "catalyst of Canadian national progress" (Webb *Occupants of Memory* 118).

Barometer Rising's characters are typological figures in a didactic allegory. Neil Macrae (whose name deliberately evokes the poet of "In Flanders' Fields," a trope used by many war novelists) and Geoffrey Wain conveniently stand in for "old" and "new" visions of society. Neil is Canada's potential if bondage from the Old World can be broken:

The life he led in Europe and England these past two years had been worse than an emptiness. It was as though he had been able to feel the old continent tearing out its own entrails as the ancient civilizations had done before it. There was no help there. For almost the first time in his life, he fully realized what being a Canadian meant. It was a heritage he had no intention of losing. (119)

Again, the war serves only to heighten the *nóstos* – the return home. The soldier's trauma is soothed by a renewed commitment to Canada. For Neil, Canada was immune to the trauma experienced by other participant nations: "[The War] was not going to do to Canada what it had done to Europe... no matter what the Canadians did over there, they were not living out the sociological results of their own lives when they crawled through

the trenches of France” (300). Jack Hodgins’s *Broken Ground* reveals Neil’s optimism about Canada avoiding the psychological trauma of First World War to have been sorely misplaced.

In MacLennan’s hands, like Ralph Connor’s before him, war and nationhood are inextricably enmeshed. It is impossible to write about one without the other. Canadian novels of the Second World War, however, try to circumvent the nationalistic pitfalls of conventional Canadian war narratives by eschewing developmental narratives of national progress in favour of existential struggles with identity and responsibility.

In the Canadian critical imagination, novels about the First World War have far outperformed novels of the Second World War. Findley’s *The Wars*, Urquhart’s *The Stone Carvers*, and Boyden’s *Three Day Road* all persist in academic and popular discussions. Curiously, no novel about the Second World War holds an equivalent position. This imbalance only further cements the First World War’s reputation as “our war.” The narrative of the First World War as Canada’s coming out party – a comforting myth perpetuated by the nationalist rhetoric of Borden, Meighen, and King – is still a compelling narrative. The Second World War, with its accompanying racist policies against Japanese-Canadians and conscription controversy, is harder for authors and critics to pin down. Nevertheless, in the two decades following the Second World War, approximately forty novels, many of them written by veterans, were published in Canada (Novak 167). Though some were well received, G.H. Sallans’s *Little Man* (1942), David Walker’s *The Pillar* (1952), and Lionel Shapiro’s *The Sixth of June* (1955) all won the Governor General’s Award for fiction, most have been largely forgotten by critics and the reading public.

Few critics are lamenting the loss of these novels to history. For Webb, “all of these authors write with a self-conscious masculinity that is overbearing and has caused them to date badly” (*Occupants of Memory* 160). Ernest Hemingway casts a long shadow over these works and his style is over-represented and poorly imitated by most of these authors. Nevertheless, even worthy Second World War novels, like McDougall’s *Execution*, which will be discussed at length in the next chapter, remain critically neglected. There are exceptions, however, to the novels of Hemingway’s Canadian copycats. At mid-century, two significant novels were published in Canada that constitute disparate but significant reactions to the Second World War. These novels introduce existentialism to Canadian war writing as a means of finding order in the chaos of the post-Second World War world. Reading *Turvey* by Earle Birney and *The Second Scroll* by A.M. Klein in tandem with existential philosophy is important for understanding how Canadian war novels were able to get out from under the yoke of civic militarism and literary nationalism.

Doubtful Intelligence: *Turvey* and the Politics of the Absurd

Earle Birney's wartime satire, *Turvey*, serves as a significant outlier in the canon of Second World War novels. In a contemporary review, *Under the Volcano* author Malcolm Lowry speaks to *Turvey*'s peculiar status, "With *Turvey*, unexpectedly, silently, and from a strange source, a classic has burst into our midst. For this to happen in the case of a brand new work must mean that it fills a gap" (73). The gap it fills has to do with its tone. It is the rare example of a Canadian war novel that effectively employs comedy. Stephen Leacock employed his particular brand of humour during the First World War, but the target of Leacock's satire was rarely the war itself. Instead, he chose to ridicule the excesses of anti-war literature:

As the first roar of grape shot zoomed past us, my stomach suddenly sank. I walked to the edge of the mound and vomited. My stomach turned. I was sick. I threw up. "Did you vomit?" asked Lord Kitchener. I said I had. "Well, I'm going to," he said. He went and vomited. He was sick. "Did you vomit, Kitchener," said Roberts. "Yes." "Well move aside and let me." (101)

Further cementing *Turvey*'s outsider status, even scholars of Canadian war novels do not seem to know what to do with it. Novak affords *Turvey* one paragraph in *Dubious Glory*. Webb dismisses Birney's novel as "farce rather than satire: there is no middle way underlying the novel's comic-yet-bleak view of humanity... its message appears more misanthropic than moralistic" (161). Webb compares *Turvey* unfavourably to *Generals Die in Bed*, arguing that it "flirts with nihilism in a way that Harrison's work does not" (161). Webb is correct in asserting that *Turvey* flirts with nihilism but underestimates its

power as a satire. *Turvey* claims to be a “military picaresque” that lampoons the military machine but its intertextual connection to another satire reveals it to be something else.

Turvey may be an outlier in Canadian fiction but it has a literary cousin in the Czech novel, *The Good Soldier Švejk*, by Jaroslav Hašek. *The Good Soldier Švejk* is a satire of the First World War and Birney borrows liberally from Hašek’s 1923 novel. George Woodcock writes that Birney “used the shape of Hašek’s story in the same way as in his poetry he has used the forms of Anglo-Saxon verse and Joycean speech; the result is not a pastiche, but an original work strengthened by allusion” (87). Both novels feature well-meaning protagonists with perpetual grins who want to serve their country admirably but are consistently stymied by military bureaucracy and incompetence. Woodcock writes, “Both characters are wise fools in the classic style; their simplicity is balanced by child-like logic and innate good sense... nothing really downs them” (87). There is a fundamental difference, however, in how each author metes out the novel’s satire. Hašek’s novel is a straightforward indictment of the military machine. In *The Good Soldier Švejk*, there is little possibility for redemption or heroism. Švejk, as depicted by Hašek, “is a hero contending with the cruelty and corruption of an alien despotism” (87). The military, in Hašek’s view, fundamentally deadens the human spirit. Birney’s derision of the military, when compared to Hašek’s, is positively mild. Birney eschews Hašek’s pessimism and “shifts the sights [of the satire] completely to take in the frustrations of an individual faced by the anti-human contradictions which a well-meaning democracy develops when it attempts to become a machine of total war” (87). Birney’s more complex view of the military, while still deriding it at every opportunity,

sheds some light on the complex ethics of the novel. While Hašek saw only darkness in military life, Birney's take on it is decidedly more absurd and distinctly existential.

Birney came by his distrust of wartime bureaucracy honestly. During the Second World War, he served in the Canadian army as a personnel selection officer in Great Britain and the Netherlands. It was the rise of Hitler and fascism that prompted him to question the Marxist and Leninist leanings of his university days. In 1934, he went to Norway to meet with Leon Trotsky and to Berlin where the Gestapo arrested him for not saluting a Nazi parade (Cameron 100-101). The non-aggression pact signed between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in 1939 proved too much to bear and Birney left the movement. The same year he was awarded the Governor General's award for his debut collection of poetry, *David and Other Poems*, Birney was posted overseas with the Canadian army (197). At age thirty-eight, he was old by army standards at the time he was deployed. He was surprised to find himself in the personnel selection division considering he had only ever taken one course in psychology as a university student (Low). Nevertheless, he spent three years in that division and wrote some of his best poetry there. Like his protagonist, Turvey, he was prone to injury and illness. He experienced VE-Day from England where he was recovering from diphtheria and returned to Canada on a hospital ship.

Given Birney's wartime experience, it is little wonder that his novel about the war is focused less on battle and more on paperwork. His novel reaffirms the German word for bureaucracy – "papierkrieg," which literally translates to paper war. *Turvey* is about Private Thomas Leadbeater Turvey, of Skookum Falls, B.C., who tries and mostly fails to contribute to the war effort. He is cursed with a perpetual grin that never fails to give

most people he encounters the wrong impression. Much of the novel details Turvey's repeatedly thwarted attempts to get to the "sharp end." More than anything, Turvey longs to join the much-vaunted Kootenay Highlanders: "He pursues his objective of finding the war and joining his friend in the Kootenay Highlanders with as much fervor and unction as Christian brings to his pilgrimage toward the Eternal City" (Lowry 73). Yet, at every turn in this picaresque, Turvey is waylaid by injury or incompetence.

Sometimes, Turvey is the victim of misfortune. This is the case when a superior misunderstands a command and sends Turvey and his platoon over a dangerous obstacle course: "When the various figures had been unhooked from the wire, pried from the mud, and assisted to the bank it was found that twelve of the thirty were indeed intact" (Birney 40). More often than not, however, Turvey is the victim of his three main character flaws: credulity, lust, and over enthusiasm. He fails gloriously at every job in the army in which he has been trusted and spends as much time confined to barracks as he does on active duty. He wakes up in a minefield after a night at a pub and shoots his own coat to smithereens believing it to be a German paratrooper. By the end of the book, Turvey has a turn as a driver, a batman, a guard, a courier, and several other jobs. He even fails as an unwitting dealer in black-market goods. He eventually makes it to England and is even shipped to Europe post VE-Day but he never sees what anyone, by the standards of a war novel, would call "action." His only battle is with the chaos and doldrums of the quotidian.

D.J. Dooley writes that when *Turvey* was published in 1949 it was predicted "that it might become one of the most popular Canadian books of recent years" (76). This has not been the case. There is no accounting for the taste of the reading public but Dooley

believes that “*Turvey* is too undisciplined to be a first-rate novel, and too bookish to be a popular account of military experiences” (76). The most common criticism of *Turvey* is that although it has some inspired episodes it does not hold together as a novel: “The book goes on too long, and the comic invention flags” (76). Does *Turvey* succeed as a comedy? Much of the debate surrounding that question boils down to where each critic locates the novel’s satire. For Woodcock, “*Turvey* passes for a humorous novel; I believe it won a medal on these grounds. But it is very far from the weak imitations of what was original when Leacock wrote it” (86). Dooley is even less kind: “[Birney] seems to put comic effect ahead of satire. In many of them, no one is being attacked; the interest lies in the comic involvements of Private Turvey” (77). Woodcock and Dooley find *Turvey*’s comedy to be problematic because the target of the satire is not fixed. These critics might find the novel less troubling if they conceived of it as less of a satirical novel and more as an absurd one.

Albert Camus writes that “the absurd does not liberate, it binds” (“The Absurd Man” 67). In *Turvey*, what binds the soldiers is the Canadian military. The military, with its arbitrary rules and recalcitrant commitment to protocol, would seem to be the obvious target of Birney’s satire. Curiously, that does not seem to be the case. In Harrison’s blistering indictment of war, there is little doubt that the military is, at least partly, to blame for the conditions, both literal and existential, of the soldiers caught up in its gears. In *Turvey*, however, the military is not portrayed as ridiculously as it could be considering Birney is writing a satire. The few critics who have written about *Turvey* tend to argue that Birney represents a one-dimensional view of the military. For Webb, “The soldiers are universally idiotic no matter their rank, and the civilians they encounter are

shallow and crass. Birney depicts the disorganization and stupidity of war and the people who fight it... *Turvey* negates military authority, soldierly prowess, and national idealism" (161). Webb's view adheres to the general consensus about *Turvey* but Lowry, in his review, offers an alternate reading: "Birney is dealing not with a corrupt and ramshackle, but with a relatively enlightened army, and without in any way belittling that army... he manages to achieve a masterly satire" (73). For Lowry, the satire is masterly because Birney "universalizes" the army (73). If Lowry is to be believed and the Canadian army is not the true target of Birney's satire, then where is the satire located?

The novel is described as a "military picaresque" but this characterization is strictly tongue-in-cheek. A picaresque novel typically follows the exploits of a roguish hero of low birth who must live by his wits in a corrupt society. *Turvey* is certainly a rascal but he is no one's idea of roguish hero. *Turvey* does not survive by his wits. If anything, it is his lack of wits that define him and keep him safe. He is hardly in the tradition of Tom Jones or Jack Wilton. Some critics believe *Turvey*'s closest literary cousin to be Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. *Don Quixote* is a humorous character and the reader is invited to laugh at his mishaps and misadventures; the man of La Mancha, like *Turvey*, however, is not the main target of the satire. Woodcock describes the novel as a "Quixotic tale without a Don, for *Turvey*, is of the clan of Sancho Panza" (87). Comedy is only brave and effective when it is directed inward or at the powerful. This is especially true of satire. There is little political capital to be gained in mocking an innocent rube from Skookum Falls.

As a character, *Turvey* is curiously static. Despite great folly and extreme experiences, *Turvey* is remarkably unchanged. Birney does not follow the Dickensian

model of tracing the impact of circumstance on character. There is none. *Turvey*, in fact, strives to do the opposite and subvert the Dickensian paradigm. Turvey's stasis as a character serves as a constant throughout the disparate and highly various vignettes that encompass the novel. What each of the dark and comic vignettes demonstrates is the effect of character on circumstance. In this regard, *Turvey* is a typical existential novel. No matter the circumstance, the self is primary.

In his introduction to the novel, Woodcock notices a similar pattern: "*Turvey* is not intended as a novel of psychological development; the environment changes, the episodes pile up, but Turvey and his companions pass through them fundamentally unchanged" (88). By the end of his wartime experience, Turvey has managed to improve his O test intelligence score to near-genius level. He had previously scored woefully low due to a combination of nervousness and indecision. His progress, however, "from a moron to a genius is illusory; he has not gained in real intelligence nor has he altered a scrap in character" (88). This is deliberate on Birney's part. Turvey represents the consummate everyman immune to the whims of circumstance. Woodcock believes that "the whole point of the novel is that it ends showing Turvey as the natural man triumphant having survived all the numbering and testing and regimenting and bullying and discipline and short arm inspecting to emerge irrepressibly his own self" (88). Turvey's most logical counterpart, then, is not Tom Jones, Don Quixote, or even Sancho Panza. Turvey is the quintessential existential hero who must strive to make meaning out of even the most absurd environment. He is a distinctly Canadian Sisyphus. In his landmark essay "The Myth of Sisyphus," Camus urges the reader to "imagine Sisyphus

happy” (33). Given the fact that Turvey is cursed with a grin that always gives him away, one need not strain one’s imagination too hard.

Twentieth-century existentialism is difficult to elucidate; it is by and large a very loose conglomeration of perspectives, aesthetics, and approaches to dealing with the world and its inherent difficulties, but in the most general sense, existentialism deals with the recurring problem of finding meaning in existence. War novels, with their exploration of existential themes of absurdity, meaninglessness and despair, represent a distinctive form of existentialism, even though early examples of existential war fiction precede the introduction of post-World War II French existentialism embodied by Sartre, Camus, and Beauvoir. As “existence precedes essence,” so the writers of war fiction precede the French existential philosophers. *Turvey* and “The Myth of Sisyphus” – archetypal texts from their respective literary and philosophical movements – are companion pieces by virtue of their mutual exploration of the absurd.

In “The Myth of Sisyphus,” Camus’s emphasis is on the absurd, meaningless nature of existence, and how one is to deal with it and go on living. Sisyphus is a figure from Greek mythology condemned to roll a boulder ceaselessly up a hill despite being aware that it will inevitably roll back down again. For Camus, this is an apt metaphor of the human condition, and he employs the concept of the absurd to describe this situation. Camus refers to the absurd as the gap between what human beings hope for in life and what they actually find. Individuals seek order, harmony and even perfection yet these aspirations are never entirely fulfilled. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus defines “the absurd” as the “divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting” (6). It is “sin

without God” (40). For Camus, the awareness of the absurd goes hand in hand with the need to reject it and to embrace the chaotic meaninglessness inherent to human existence.

For Camus, “This world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of the irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart” (26). He goes on to offer a further clarification of what is at stake in a philosophy of the absurd:

Man stands face to face with the irrational. He feels within him his longing for reason and happiness. The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world. This must not be forgotten because the whole consequence of a life can depend on it. The irrational, the human nostalgia, and the absurd that is born of their encounter – these are the three characters in the drama. (32)

If Turvey is a Sisyphean character, the true target of Birney’s satire becomes clearer. It is not Turvey himself since his quirks are essential to his eventual triumph. As Woodcock points out, “As in all good comedies, the right side wins; Turvey triumphant is Man victorious” (89). It is not the structure of the military whose biggest flaw is that it does not know what to do with a man like Turvey. For that matter, Turvey is just as ill equipped to deal with the military. He is not like Schweik who consistently outwits a series of idiotic superiors. The relationship between Turvey and the military is essentially a square peg meeting a round hole. The true target of Birney’s comedic barbs is existence itself. The absurdity of Turvey’s situation does not prompt the reader to laugh at Turvey but rather to identify with him. In his unwavering but futile quest to impose order and meaning on his life, Turvey morphs from buffoon to everyman. His monomaniacal

efforts to join the Kootenay Highlanders represent the human desire to anchor one's life in meaning and order; of course, for Turvey, that resolution remains just out of reach. The Kootenay Highlanders are his uphill boulder.

Birney's relationship to existentialism is directly related to his rejection of Communism. Like many committed Marxists, Camus included, the stultifying bureaucracy and malevolence of the Soviet Union was simply irreconcilable for Birney and he left the movement that had defined his political life behind just before the outbreak of the Second World War. At around the same time, Camus was expelled from the Algerian Communist party for refusing to toe the party line by supporting the Algerian nationalist politician Messali Hadj. It was during the Second World War that Camus crystallized his existential philosophy culminating in the publication of *The Stranger* in 1942. It is likely that Birney's philosophical progression followed this archetypal pattern. Many writers and thinkers dismissed communism in favour of existentialism in the 1930s as it became clear that the Soviet Union was going to fall short of its promise. In that regard, existentialism filled a crucial philosophical gap.

It is not until mid-century, in the middle of Birney's career, that existential ideas begin to appear in his writing. Written shortly after *Turvey* was published, "Bushed" (1951) is perhaps the most obviously existential poem in Birney's oeuvre. It is also, along with "David" (1942) and "The Damnation of Vancouver" (1977), one of Birney's best poems. Of "Bushed," Northrop Frye wrote, "that for the virtuosity of language there has never been anything like it in Canadian poetry" (16). Like *Turvey*, "Bushed" is concerned with the effects of an extreme situation on the individual. In this case, an unnamed trapper's soul is tested and distorted due to extreme isolation:

But the moon carved unknown totems
 out of the lakeshore
 owls in the beardusky woods derided him
 moosehorned cedars circled his swamps and tossed
 their antlers up to the stars
 then he knew though the mountain slept the winds
 were shaping its peak to an arrowhead
 poised (31)

According to poet Jim Johnstone, editor of *The Essential Earle Birney*, “Bushed” is the “pinnacle of Birney’s existential lyricism” (3). Place on a continuum with *Turvey*, “Bushed” can be read as further development of Birney’s attempts to reconcile his lyricism with his existentialism.

Birney’s own account of his poetic process, *The Cow Jumped Over the Moon* (1972), is periodically peppered with quotations from writers that Birney admired, punctuating points he makes throughout the text. There are passages from Paul Claudel, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Alexander Pope. One conspicuous inclusion is Franz Kafka’s declaration that “Happy men do not make literature” (qtd. in *The Cow Jumped* 7). This idea is not out of character for the famously gloomy Kafka but does not really match Birney’s typically jocular tone. The inclusion of Kafka in a text about how he writes poems is perhaps a sly nod to the rarely acknowledged existential undercurrent to Birney’s work.

The most Sisyphean moment in *Turvey* is when Turvey riddles his own coat full of bullets believing it to be a German paratrooper. Rumours circulate that Germans may have dropped paratroopers and Turvey's imagination runs wild at the prospect:

Turvey visualized enormous square-jowled men wearing German helmets above Canadian battledress; they were festooned with grenades and gleaming knives. He saw himself surprising three, four of them in the foggy lane, marching them, hands high, to the guard house (248).

Still dreaming of glory, Turvey comes upon a figure in the night and empties his magazine into it. The figure is unmoved and Turvey begins to panic: "for the first time in his rational if picaresque life, horror was visited upon Turvey" (251). Never one to just give up, Turvey makes "his last heroic attack" and batters "with mounting savagery the Thing on the fence until the gunstock broke in his hands" (251). It is only after he is pulled away by fellow soldiers does Turvey realize he is not wearing his coat.

This episode is the height of absurdity. It is a comic vignette, to be sure, but it also foregrounds the existentialism of the novel. Turvey engages with what he believes to be the enemy but, instead, finds nothing. All of Turvey's efforts to fit into the military structure or even to perform what is expected of the protagonist of a war novel yield the same result – nothingness. As Jean-Paul Sartre famously put it, "Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of being - like a worm" (21). No matter how much effort Turvey expends, he never achieves the transcendence he envisions. Like everyone else, Turvey is "condemned to be free" ("Existentialism is a Humanism" 295). When he finally achieves his goal of being deployed to the front, Turvey remains unfulfilled: "Headed for the front! For the Sharp End! ... Yet somehow, as on other occasions when he had drawn near to his

martial goal, Turvey wasn't nearly as happy as he thought he would be" (278). In "The Myth of Sisyphus," Camus portrays Sisyphus, the absurd hero, as a man who is punished for a "crime" that cannot be explained. He is a tragic figure, someone suffering under an immense burden. Camus subverts this notion; he imagines all of humanity in the position of Sisyphus searching for meaning and purpose in the mundane and the banal. It is the resolution of this absurdity that is the focus of Camus's essay, and he suggests that despite his being burdened by the boulder, he can nevertheless imagine Sisyphus happy. Turvey, like the protagonist of Camus's essay, is an existential absurd hero, who inhabits a world of absurdity and chaos, and despite his circumstances, attempts to create his own system of meaning: "once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does" (Sartre "Existentialism is a Humanism" 295). It is in his willingness to carry on in the face of persistent chaos and disorder that Turvey is transfigured into a hero.

Birney was very much a nonconformist and *Turvey* does not strive to ape Camus or Sartre. First and foremost, *Turvey* includes humour and gentle satire in contrast to more self-serious works like *The Stranger* and *No Exit* (1944). In that regard, Birney is more akin to an existentialist like Samuel Beckett. Like *Waiting for Godot* (1953), which premiered just three years after the publication of *Turvey*, Birney engages with nothingness without endorsing one particular worldview, even existentialism. If *Turvey* did endorse existentialism that would mean that one explanation survived the atrocities of the twentieth century and the novel is about the loss of all explanations, all answers.

One target of Birney's satire for which there is plenty of textual evidence is bureaucracy in general, and this too aligns Birney with existentialism, particularly the work of Kafka and Hannah Arendt. Although Elspeth Cameron's biography of Birney is

scant on details of his service overseas, it is likely that Birney drew on his own experience as part of the personnel selection committee. He depicts the administrative faction of the Canadian army as one of petty rivalries and steadfast commitment to obfuscation. In the chapter, "Turvey is Enlisted," Turvey's suitability for the army becomes a battleground upon which two military bureaucrats work out their professional rivalry. Lieutenant Smith, a likely stand-in for Birney himself, is a conscientious examiner without a degree in psychology. The distracted and lazy Captain Crashaw oversees the department thanks to his degree: "[Smith] thought with resentment that he, the Personnel Officer in charge of the whole third floor (except Captain Crashaw's corner office), had to keep messing around with a dirty window, while that fat Crashaw had a fan... Everybody kowtowing to the psychiatrist" (13).

After a strange and wide-ranging meeting with Turvey, the sensitive Lieutenant Smith concludes, rightly given the interview, that Turvey is not suited for military life. His report concludes that Turvey's "Unusual family history, attitude to father, health history, accident proneness, confessed nervousness, doubtful intelligence, tic, all point to nervous disorder sufficiently serious to raise question of suitability for army in any capacity" (22). Smith forwards his report to his superior, Captain Crashaw, who will make the ultimate decision as to Turvey's suitability. The captain, however, does not take the interview as seriously as Smith. He acts as though the interview is "a rather amusing chore" (23). He asks a few lackadaisical questions about Turvey's health: "Did [Turvey] ever have dizzy spells or faint or see double? But he apparently expected 'no' and didn't wait for answers" (24). Finally, Crashaw asks the important question: "Do you want to be in the infantry, Turvey?" (26). Turvey affirms that, indeed, he does want to be in the

infantry and Crashaw overrules Smith's report with a letter that is more directed at Smith's alleged overreach than Turvey's qualifications: "should have further psychiatric check-up in six months (by a qualified Medical Officer). No neurosis. Intelligence higher than that of some officers I have met. Recommend he be assigned to infantry without further delay" (26). Upon reading the letter contradicting his own assessment, Lieutenant Smith must resist "a treacherous impulse to cry" (26).

Lieutenant Smith, and probably Birney as well, were operating in accordance with an official shift in military operations after the First World War. The Second World War was supposed to usher in an era of more modern approaches to military psychology. Military strategists in the First World War operated under the assumption that if a recruit was physically able bodied he was fit to fight at the front (Novak 97). There was little consideration of mental fitness. The accepted term for Shell Shock or its variants was "the war neuroses" and it was seen and treated as a sign of weakness or, worse, cowardice (Morton 56). There was a definite paradigm shift in the Second World War as psychological testing became integrated into the selection process for new recruits and enlisted men (Novak 97).

In 1941, the Department of National Defense appointed two prominent Ontario psychologists, George Brock Chisholm and William Line, to oversee a new Directorate of Personnel Selection (97). An objective of the committee was to expand the qualifications for new recruits to include a psychological test. In a memorandum, Chisholm outlined the reasoning behind this integration:

The evaluation of personality and the testing, psychologically, of personnel entering into and already enlisted in the Canadian Army, with a view to guiding

personnel into the position for which they are best suited, as well as advising in the selecting of officers and other ranks to fill the varied types of Army appointments (Copp and McAndrew 11).

In a paper delivered to the American Psychiatric Association, Chisholm attempted to debunk the masculine myth that soldiers need only be able bodied: “Good mental health is essential for the good soldier... In order for this to be possible he must be relatively free of internal conflicts, guilts and fears which are not relevant to the military situation” (qtd. in Novak 98). This revolutionary shift in policy had an untold impact on military selection and was brought about, in part, by the literature of the First World War.

Many of the most acclaimed First World War poets suffered from the kind of “shell shock” the new personnel selection policies were supposed to diminish. Often, they were subject to woefully deficient psychological treatment. While recuperating from “Shell Shock” near Edinburgh, Wilfred Owen would meet fellow patient Siegfried Sassoon. Both poets would choose war as their main subject but they differed greatly in terms of style. While Owen relied on Romanticism and classical allusion, Sassoon wrote in a defiantly colloquial voice and employed satire in a way that Owen never did.

Like Birney, it is Sassoon’s capacity for satire that distinguishes him from other war writers who, understandably, tend to adopt a serious tone. The tongue-in-cheek nature of some of Sassoon’s poetry signals him as an antecedent of Joseph Heller and James Jones. This satiric impulse is best on display in “The General,” quoted in the previous chapter. This short poem bitterly satirizes the incompetence of the generals in command. In the poem, the General in question tells his men “Good-morning; good morning!” (1961), which prompts one of the soldiers to remark, “He’s a cheery old card”

(1961). The General's cheeriness is contrasted starkly with the results of his incompetence, "Now the soldiers he smiled at are most of 'em dead" (1962). In the poem's final line, Sassoon uses the slang term "did for them both" to imply that the General's incompetent plan of attack is tantamount to murder. Like Harrison, Owen wrote about his war experience as way of dealing with his Shell Shock and to hold on to his humanity. Sassoon has an axe to grind and casts his satiric eye on those he blames for the countless tragedies of the First World War.

Beyond the trenches, T.S. Eliot depicts a postwar Europe that is profoundly changed. It is changed topographically, of course, but its moral cosmology is also shaken. If Owen and Sassoon wrote from personal trauma, Eliot expressed the collective sense of a world turned upside down. It is impossible to overstate the importance and complexity of *The Waste Land*. Read in concert with Owen and Sassoon, however, some of the poem's themes are made less opaque. Like Owen and Sassoon, Eliot wrote some of his best work recovering from a breakdown. The poem's final section, "What the Thunder Said," was completed while Eliot was hospitalized in a sanitarium in Switzerland after a "nervous breakdown" in 1921 brought on by stresses in his marriage and work. The poem's interest in recording the fragmented nature of postwar European life would seem to speak to the poet's sense of his fragmented consciousness. The chaos that is *The Waste Land* emerged from Eliot's perceptions of disorder in the world around him, perceptions that were brought on at least in part by the unrest within his own mind. Some have argued that Eliot wrote his stability back into existence.

This war and interwar poetry was supposed to serve as antidote to the failures to address the psychological wounds of the First World War. The committee led by Line

and Chisholm was meant to ensure that there were no more Owens, Sassoons, and Eliots. Yet *Turvey* depicts a personnel selection committee that is hardly modern or enlightened. In fact, if anything, it is retrograde. As Kafka writes, “Every revolution evaporates and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy. The chains of tormented mankind are made out of red tape” (qtd. in Deleuze 58). This step backward is because, despite whatever good intentions on the part of the military, implementing any new policy depends on adding another layer of bureaucracy. For Birney, a lifelong radical, governmental bureaucracy was, at best, a nuisance and, at worst, treacherous. His representation of bureaucracy is congruent with Hannah Arendt’s analysis of how bureaucracy functions in society. For Arendt, a bureaucracy can only be truly effective if it cloaks its mechanisms and operations in a sort of “pseudomysticism”:

Pseudomysticism [...] is the stamp of bureaucracy when it becomes a form of government. Since the people it dominates never really know why something is happening, and a rational interpretation of laws does not exist, there remains only one thing that counts, the brutal naked event itself. What happens to one then becomes subject to an interpretation whose possibilities are unlimited by reason and unhampered by knowledge. (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* 245)

The personnel selection division could have made a vital contribution to the war effort but, according to Birney’s representation of its mechanisms in *Turvey*, their work amounted to little more than performance. The psychological exam was an invisible hurdle. The fact of the matter is that armies need soldiers, and it was the job of men like Captain Crashaw to ensure that men got to the front, no matter how unsuitable. That is

how Turvey ended up in the infantry. Birney disabuses the reader of any notion that the lessons of the First World War, embodied and written about by its poets, were heeded.

Turvey's experience with the bureaucracy of the personnel selection division can also be read productively with Kafka's existential novel *The Trial* (1925). Like Turvey, *The Trial's* protagonist Josef K. also must confront an implacable and mystical bureaucracy. For reasons never revealed, he is arrested and subjected to the judicial process for an unspecified crime. As Max Weber argues, "Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally domination through knowledge" (225). Eventually Josef K. laments, "You may object that this is not a trial at all; you are quite right, for it is only a trial if I recognize it as such" (50). Josef K. asks his supposed accusers, "Given the senselessness of the whole affair, how could the bureaucracy avoid becoming entirely corrupt? It would be impossible, even the highest judges couldn't manage it, even with himself" (50). Ultimately, K. cannot escape the totalitarian bureaucracy of *The Trial* because he is incapable of completely recognizing its absurdity and his attempts to understand the pseudomystic elements behind its operation only lend legitimacy to their authority.

Josef K's dilemma, his "trial," is the universal search for the Self in the mundane. Absurdity comes into Joseph K.'s life at the beginning of the novel: "Someone must have been telling lies about Joseph K., for without having done anything wrong he was arrested one fine morning" (1). K.'s awakening "one fine morning" is rife with metaphorical significance. Camus describes a similar process in "The Myth of Sisyphus":

It happens that the stage sets collapse. Rising, street-car, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, street-car, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday

Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm - this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the “why” arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. (12-13)

This “weariness tinged with amazement” succinctly describes the specific ennui of the protagonists in Sartre’s *Nausea* and Camus’s *The Stranger*. Josef K. is a man whose stage sets have collapsed. Turvey, on the other hand, does not seem to go through the same process. He does strive to make order out of chaos and his successes are tinged with melancholy but he is not beset by the same crisis of Self as Josef K. or Antoine Roquentin. Perhaps Turvey’s happy-go-lucky demeanour in the face of a dehumanizing bureaucracy can be attributed to his fundamental passivity as a character. Whatever the reason, Turvey keeps smiling.

Therefore, the critique inherent to the underrated *Turvey* is two-fold. The most obvious facet of Birney’s critique questions the progress of assessing if men are fit for combat. The tragedies of the First World War were meant to yield a more enlightened view of psychology in the Second. Birney’s depiction of a fractured personnel selection division and its bungling of Turvey’s assignment reveals these much touted advancements to have been illusory. More significantly, however, Birney portrays life as an absurd carnival not to excoriate an overwhelmed but well-meaning military but rather to universalize the experience of fruitlessly trying to make order out of chaos. In *Turvey*, Birney extrapolates from his protagonist’s travails to the human condition, which is just as absurd as the picaresque presented in the novel. Turvey’s experience is the human experience. Turvey transformed from simple-minded buffoon to modern-day Sisyphus not because of his triumphs but because of his failures. He stands at the bottom of a tall

hill ready to roll the boulder back up again: “Then with a war whoop that would have carried across Kootenay Flats, Mr. Turvey scurried like a plump demented squirrel out of the Horse Palace and into Civvy Street” (352). He is unbroken and unbought – he is happy.

On the Money: Existentialism and Imperial Semiotics in A.M. Klein's *The Second Scroll*

A.M. Klein's *The Second Scroll* (1951) may be a surprising choice for a dissertation on Canadian war novels since it features no battle scenes or soldiers and takes place well away from any danger. Like Leonard Cohen's *Flowers for Hitler* (1964) or Irving Layton's later poetry, however, *The Second Scroll* widens the perimeter of the Holocaust to include those members of the Jewish Diaspora who avoided its unspeakable violence, and this perimeter includes Montreal. In this regard, Klein engages with what Primo Levi wrote about the witnesses of the unprecedented violence of the twentieth century, who "are not only a tiny but also an anomalous minority... those who, through prevarication, skill or luck, never touched bottom. Those who have, and who have seen the face of the Gorgon, did not return, or returned wordless" (Hobsbawm 1). *The Second Scroll* is a war novel in the vein of *The Imperialist*, wherein survivors must make sense of a new world order borne out of the violence of war.

Louis Dudek once described A.M. Klein as "the most autobiographical poet writing in Canada" (67). Although Klein did write a great deal about his own identity and what forces shaped it, how he felt about ideology and identity formation is difficult to determine absolutely. He was, in fact, fairly ambivalent about his role as a "Jewish writer." He complained in a 1943 letter to fellow Montreal poet A.J.M. Smith that this type of criticism was lazy and juvenile: "Why did they... have to go flaunting my circumcision? It's an adolescent trick – the whimsical opening of a man's fly" (Gliner). He was also critical, however, of Jewish writers who disregarded their cultural heritage.

In a letter to the Yiddish critic Shmuel Niger, he accused these lapsed Jewish artists of having “nothing original to contribute.” After all, he reasoned, “one cannot create with another’s genitals” (Gliner).

A great deal of scholarly attention, notably by Solomon Spiro and Zailig Pollock, has been devoted to representations of Klein’s Jewish identity in *The Second Scroll*. This devotion fails to do justice to what Klein called his “many tentacled mind” and the novel’s indebtedness to existential philosophy (“A Myriad-Minded Man” 125). A close reading of Klein’s use of British Imperial symbols and capitalist ephemera in the novel in concert with the foundational texts of existentialism as well as the work of Louis Althusser disrupts the mainstream school of thought regarding *The Second Scroll*. The novel is something akin to a self-help manual, guiding its readers from trauma to transcendence. In his search for his Uncle Melech, the unnamed narrator strives to solidify his religious identity but instead finds a national one. In doing so, he serves as emblem for how a Jewish-Canadian can make meaning out of chaos. Furthermore, the narrator’s bildungsroman is an appropriation of the traditional soldier’s narrative arc found in Romantic fiction – much like the protagonists of many war novels, the narrator starts out as a Canadian naïf before being ushered into maturity in the context of war. The chaos and violence of war, however remote, prompts an ethical and religious crisis in a protagonist that can only be resolved by experiencing the source of the anxiety first hand.

A fact-finding mission Klein undertook in 1949 to Europe, Northern Africa, and Israel sponsored by the Canadian Jewish Congress inspired *The Second Scroll*. The trip was a consolation prize for Klein after a failed political campaign for the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. He recorded his impressions in a series of 17 articles

published by the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* under the title “Notebook of a Journey.” He then transformed his “notebook” into the highly symbolic, allusive, and existential *The Second Scroll*. Although the novel celebrates Judaism, it is not meant to represent the consolidation of a Jewish identity or ideology; it is, instead, a parable for Canadians and an existential blueprint for the Jewish Diaspora. Sidney Feshbach writes, “Behind the fireworks of Klein’s intercontinental and ontological dialectics... was a simpler single profound desire to unite in his poetry his traditional Judaism re-created and the best values of Canadian democracy... That shore of freedom is Israel, is Paradise, and could be Canada” (xxii). The narrator’s search for his Uncle Melech pushes him to assert a distinctly Canadian identity.

Like *Turvey*, Klein’s novel is illuminated when read in tandem with existentialism. Klein had a complicated relationship with mid-century existentialism. Though he wrote at the same time as existentialism’s global emergence, Klein was dubious of its value and not shy about saying so. In a scathing review of Sartre’s *Antisemite and Jew* for the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, Klein writes:

I began the reading of this book, I must confess, with a certain amount of prejudice both against its author and against his subject... Existentialism, I suspected, was nothing more than the Da-Da, aftermath of the First World War, only now it was arrayed in a respectable (because it covered more) New Look. I felt too a certain disdain for the credo of existentialism: a religion which feared to incur the expense of a god. (“Of Jewish Existentialism” 266)

Sartre’s solution to global anti-Semitism was, essentially, assimilation. In *Antisemite and Jew*, he proposes that, since socialism and Judaism overlap in values so much anyway,

would it not be best if Jewish people renounced their faith and just continued their philanthropic work under the auspices of international socialism? Klein's opposition to this was swift and unequivocal:

I do not intend an aspersion upon Socialism... but Socialism – it is clear from Sartre's exposition – involves assimilation, the loss of distinction, the unified amalgam, and thus the solution is, after all, but the dissolution one was seeking to avoid... the authentic Jew can only ask: Do you call this living? (268)

The perils of replacing Judaism with secular Socialism are synthesized in *The Second Scroll* when Uncle Melech briefly adopts Marxism as an ideology after renouncing his faith. Unsurprisingly, this flirtation is short-lived. Much of Uncle Melech's, and the narrator's, struggle with his identity can be read as a resistance against assimilation. *The Second Scroll* serves as another rebuke to Sartre. By the novel's end, the narrator is a Jewish-Canadian-Socialist-Artist without having renounced anything.

Klein was not wary of all existential philosophy. In fact, perhaps paradoxically, it was an existential philosopher, Martin Buber, who influenced Klein's cultural protectionism. One of the most prominent Jewish philosophers of the twentieth-century, Buber is best known for his work *I and Thou* (1937). In 1951, Klein wrote an editorial cautioning Buber against travelling to Germany to accept the Goethe prize: "Here, too, Buber's philosophy is pertinent and receives mundane interpretation; it is the 'You-They' philosophy; remember who 'you' are and remember who 'they' are" (Feshbach xx). *I and Thou* had a profound impact on Klein as he was writing *The Second Scroll*. *I and Thou* sets out a dialogical way of living in the world. There is the attitude of the "I" toward the "It," which consists of experiencing something that is separate from the self. This is

contrasted with the attitude of the “I” toward the “Thou,” wherein the relationship is not separated by discreet bounds. *The Second Scroll* “reflect[s] Buber’s ideas... The novel dramatizes the relations of the ‘human’ nephew (‘I’), who speaks towards the ‘human’ uncle (‘Thou’)... The novel contains both a physical quest and one voice seeking response from a second in dialogue” (xxi). This relationship recalls Harrison’s image of the two soldiers stuck together in the trenches. Just as the narrator exists in a liminal space, caught between two different worlds, *The Second Scroll* takes place in an existential antechamber in between I and Thou.

As Klein’s dismissive rhetoric suggests, the type of existentialism espoused by Sartre could not be reconciled with Klein’s Jewish faith. Ever the anachronist, though, Klein finds an unlikely kindred spirit in the proto-existentialist thought of Søren Kierkegaard, whose existential yearning still allows for a transcendent force in the universe, maybe God. Kierkegaard’s influence on Klein is often overlooked. In “T.S. Eliot and the Nobel Prize,” Klein compares T.S. Eliot, whom he considered to be a “prig and a snob,” unfavourably to the Danish philosopher: “Nor can it be said that Eliot, though derivative in manner, was a world-shaker in thought. The themes that run through all of his work is [sic] the orthodox doctrine of Anglican Christianity. They are the old truths which our poet reiterates; nor does he refresh them, like Kierkegaard, with new insights” (“T.S. Eliot and the Nobel Prize 272). Klein’s praise of Kierkegaard is unsurprising given their shared pre-occupation in living an ethical as well as a religious life.

Klein’s affinity for Kierkegaard’s philosophy is also evident in their shared preoccupation with reiteration and repetition. In his comic-philosophical novel *Repetition*

(1843), Kierkegaard makes the case for the value of repetition: “Repetition is an indestructible garment that fits closely and tenderly, neither binds nor sags... repetition is a beloved wife of whom one never wearies, for one only becomes weary of what is new. One never grows weary of the old, and when one has that, one is happy” (4). This optimistic view of repetition is diametrically opposed to the works of the more virulent anti-war novelists like Harrison who saw repetition as merely another example of life’s cruel monotony: again, “We do not know what day it is. We have lost count. It makes no difference whether it is Sunday or Monday. It is merely another day – a day on which one may die” (14).

The broad question Kierkegaard’s *Repetition* poses is how a sense of meaning in life can be regained after a great trauma. Given *The Second Scroll*’s connection to the Holocaust, it is not difficult to see why Klein was drawn to such themes. For Klein, the value of repetition is front and centre in *The Second Scroll*: it is a novel of constant repetitions and recapitulations. Even the title suggests as much. Klein treads over the same thematic terrain again and again before providing a gloss, which, in his own words, “repeats in minor the major themes” again (Feshbach xix). The novel’s final chapter is titled “Deuteronomy,” which in itself suggests a retelling. Klein wrote that one of the novel’s main themes was the Kierkegaardian tendency of history to repeat itself: “I was struck furthermore by the similarity between contemporary Jewish history and our ancient saga – I thought I saw in events today a recurrence, in large outline, of the events recorded in the Pentateuch. This is a *Second Scroll*” (xviii). So, Klein views the history of his people in the same way Kierkegaard conceives of the world, as an endless series of deuteronomies and repetitions. For Feshbach, then, “Klein’s deuteronomic writing...

makes *The Second Scroll* a secular, artistic, truly Kierkegaardian repetition: the present is, in Kierkegaard's term, remembered forward from the First Scroll... Each moment of the novel projects exchanges between eternity and time, transcendence and immanence, past and present" (xix). Therefore, Klein retells his people's story as a means of finding new ways from past ones: "*The Second Scroll* is a second naming, or deuteronomy, in several ways: the murder and burial of Uncle Melech, occurring in the *Deuteronomy* chapter, is a Deuteronomy of the reburial of Theodor Herzl in Israel, of the murder of 12th-century 'returning' Judah Ha-Levi, and of the Deuteronomic blessing and death of Moses" (xix).

It is Kierkegaard who allows Klein to extrapolate from an experience in Israel to comment on Canada and to reconcile the bifurcated identity of his narrator. It allows Klein to impose a credible order on seemingly chaotic events. The narrator's arc, in addition to being a soldier's arc, is emblematic of an existential bildungsroman. Both Melech and the protagonist try out different ideologies for size, but like Antoine Roquentin in Sartre's *Nausea* or Merseault in Camus's *The Stranger*, they must ultimately assert an individual ethos. For the narrator, that ethos is conspicuously Canadian.

In his review of *The Second Scroll* for *The Canadian Forum*, Malcolm Ross writes that the novel is quintessentially Canadian because "Klein stakes out a claim for [Canadians] in richer and further dimensions than we have hitherto dared to occupy" (234). Despite its overtly Jewish content, Ross believes that "the author's Canadianism is a nodal point in the treatment of his theme" (234). The protagonist of *The Second Scroll* struggles with his double identity, torn between his Canadian upbringing and the desire to seek out his mercurial Uncle Melech in the newly formed Jewish State of Israel. This

dilemma synthesizes the schism of experience between Jewish immigrants who fled Europe prior to the Holocaust and those who stayed behind. This seemingly irreconcilable tension constitutes a Buberian schism between I and Thou or Us and Them. It also recalls the seemingly irreconcilable schism between soldiers who served in Europe and those who remained at home, as represented in *The Inverted Pyramid* and *Generals Die in Bed*.

The primary way in which Klein is able to achieve rapprochement between these two forces is in his representation of how characters interact with national symbols, currency, and other conveyers of ideology. Klein depicts in greater detail what Duncan suggests in *The Imperialist* – that ideology is created and perpetuated by civic ritual. The theoretical framework established by Louis Althusser illuminates the relationship between subject and ideology. For him, ideology is omnipresent; it exists in every representation of reality and every social practice, and all of these qualities inevitably confirm or contest a particular construction of reality. For Althusser, “all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects” (115). He describes interpellation as the constitutive process whereby individuals acknowledge and respond to ideology. Interpellation refers to the specific moment where subject and ideology interact. Even the simplest interactions take on ideological significance: “what thus seems to take place outside ideology... in reality takes place in ideology... Ideology never says, ‘I am ideological’” (118). In *The Second Scroll*, the loudest ideological hail comes from the symbols and images of ideological state apparatuses, particularly coins, popular culture, and capitalist ephemera.

Klein represents how minority groups are initiated into identity and ideology. Despite their outsider and, therefore, existentially fraught status as Jews in Montreal, the narrator and his family are called to ideology by Ideological State Apparatuses, institutions that generate ideologies which individuals (and groups) internalize and subsequently obey. Initially, Uncle Melech is a resistor to the ideology of state-sponsored institutions or as the protagonist's father calls him, "the renegade" (*The Second Scroll* 17). He personifies the crisis of identity after the collapse of ideological state apparatuses provoked by the Russian pogrom of 1917 and, eventually, the Holocaust. He is ideologically set adrift and forced to reconstruct his faith in a God that would allow near annihilation. As a result, he becomes a philanderer of ideas, unable to commit to any one ideology.

Many European Jews, like Uncle Melech, experienced a crisis of faith after the policies of Czarist Russia disrupted the established *shtetl* culture. The narrator and his family, on the other hand, do not experience this crisis in the same way because they withdrew from that world in favour of Canada. The geographic distance becomes ideological, and Klein shows how the narrator's father is hailed by imperial semiotics and incorporated into Canadian ideology in order to expedite assimilation.

The name "Melech" is the Hebrew word for king, a moniker to which the narrator's Uncle does justice, at least at first: "the most venerable scholars, men as full of Torah as is the pomegranate of seeds, did time and again concede him the crown, declaring that he was indeed as his name indicated, Melech, king" (19). The royal metaphor hides a more subtle allusion to the "crown of the Torah," a well-known Talmudic concept relating to piety and scholarship which has become a proverbial phrase

(Spiro 126). When he is feared dead, Melech's sister laments, "My fallen crown!" (*The Second Scroll* 19). Meanwhile, in Canada, Melech's nephew and brother-in-law are concerned with an entirely different king, George V. Uncle Melech, at this point a Talmudic scholar, is apolitical and "removed from worldly matters," so much so that "he knew not to identify the countenances on coins" (19), meaning that Melech was unable to identify the faces on the official currency of the state. This is likely an allusion to the Talmudic rabbi, Menahem ben Simai, a third-century teacher who did not look at the effigy of a coin because of the prohibition against graven images and idolatry. It is made explicit that Melech himself carries a distrust of images altogether; his devotion to his religion serves as a guard against the indoctrination of secular ideology. When the narrator asks his mother for a photograph of his uncle, she is bewildered: "A photograph! Don't you know Jews don't make or permit themselves to be made into images? That's the second commandment. Uncle Melech wouldn't think of going to a photographer" (19).

The narrator's father does not share Melech's distrust of graven images. Coins and especially the regal faces that appear on them are of the utmost importance to the protagonist's father. For him, the coin featuring the image of King George V embodies his gratitude to his adopted nation and symbolizes what it has given him: "this was no cliché to my father – freedom" (24). In Althusserian terms, the coin calls out to the narrator's father; the coin says "freedom" and affirms his ideology. Whenever one of his Ratno compatriots derides Canada, the country of his choice but not his birth, the narrator's father would "withdraw a coin from his pocket and point to the image thereon engraved: 'See this man, this is King George V. He looks like Czar Nicholas II. They are

cousins. They wear the same beards. They have similar faces. But the one is to the other like day is to night... After Nikolaichuk you shouldn't even so much as whisper a complaint against this country!" (24). The narrator's father's devotion to George V is reminiscent of Barry Dunbar and the rest of Connor's holy crusaders. The semiotics of coins, and the ability to distinguish between the faces upon them, initiate the narrator's father into Canadian capitalist ideology while being completely lost on Uncle Melech.

This devotion to Canadian imperial identity seems highly ironic, a tone to which Klein returned throughout his career. For Klein, exile "ruthlessly wiped off even the first faint glimmerings of a smile from the face of the Jew," yet "still could the Jew indulge, though secretly, in a sly dig at fate, a sardonic smile at inquisitorial busybodies, a word satiric" ("Of Hebrew Humour 103-104). Hutcheon writes that irony depends upon "the twin conditions of context and community of belief." It allows a speaker "to work within a dominant tradition but also to challenge it" (*Splitting Images* 2). Here, once again, Kierkegaard proves useful. He saw irony as revolutionary because it allows its practitioners to question what is objectively real: "it is the ironist's pleasure to seem ensnared by the same prejudice imprisoning the other person" (*The Concept of Irony* 267). Therefore, the father's embrace of an imperial identity is ironic but also sincere.

The father's "essentially pragmatic" patriotism does not reach the same level of fervour as that of his friend Cohen, who has also been indoctrinated into Canadian ideology through the power of semiotics. Cohen sincerely incorporates the symbols of Empire into his double identity; he "carved the ferocious lions guarding and upholding the Decalogue in front of the Ark of the Covenant in the Chevra Thillim, the martial Cohen who always bore on his person a Union Jack fringed with tzitzith and who

threatened at the slightest provocation to fight the South African War over again” (*The Second Scroll* 24-25). Cohen the cabinet-maker reconciles his adopted Canadian and Imperial identity, represented by the lions and the Union Jack, with his Jewish faith symbolized by the fringes on a Jewish prayer shawl (the tzitzith) and the orthodox synagogue (Chevra Thillim). Among immigrant members of society, the most expedient route to acceptance and, perhaps, assimilation is through the incorporation of national symbols. Therefore, coins and flags are performative and continually manifest ideology through action. Althusser describes this relationship between action and ideology as imaginary using Pascal’s formula for belief: “Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe” (114). Ideologies are lived as much as they are known. These efforts are essentially existential in nature. Both Cohen and the narrator’s father employ these nationalistic strategies to close the Buberian gap between “I” and “Thou.” By draping themselves in the flag, they hope to dissolve the dialectic that defines them so that there is no “thou,” only “I.” While for Birney’s protagonist, Turvey, everything seems to yield nothingness, this is not the case for the narrator and his father in *The Second Scroll*. Symbols, be they religious or national, allow them to order their world.

Uncle Melech, on the other hand, is so devoted to his religious studies that he is unable to read popular symbols and determine their meaning. Therefore, as the protagonist’s father comes to see the coin, King George V, and Canada as synonymous with freedom, similar symbols and methods of indoctrination like currency or flags are lost on Uncle Melech. He has no ideology outside of his faith. He must renounce faith after being victimized by the Russian pogroms and with no other identity to ground him,

becomes an ideological flâneur, wandering aimlessly and trying different ideologies much like Camus and Birney during the Second World War.

Melech seeks salvation first in Marxism. His renunciation of his faith and his adoption of Marxism represent an unforgivable transgression for his brother-in-law who is now, thanks to King George V, a loyal capitalist Canadian. It has a distinctly different effect, however, on the narrator himself. Again, though, the narrator is drawn to Marxism not so much through choice but through the “hail” of ideological state institutions. In this case, it is the university that initiates, if not indoctrinates, the narrator into Marxist sympathies: “I was by this time attending the university and had been conditioned to look at Marxism with a most unfilial impartiality and so the reports of Uncle Melech’s progress in the Communist Party not only failed to disturb me but filled me with a secret pride” (*The Second Scroll* 25). The same Bolshevism that, to his father, was “tantamount to apostasy” delights the narrator. His father, spared the initiation into progressive politics through a liberal education, is unable to forgive the transgression: “We never again spoke of him in our house” (24).

Like Birney’s, Melech’s flirtation with the Communist Party cannot survive the German-Soviet pact of 1939. This pact, which led to the surrender of three and a half million Jews in Eastern Europe to the Nazis, justifiably leads Melech to believe that his Marxist ideology has been “a saying of grace before poison” (30). He wanders isolated and disillusioned until he is imprisoned with the rest of the Jews of Kamenets. Miraculously, he finds himself the sole survivor of a massacre and writes to his family in Canada to tell them of his renewed faith and desire to go to Israel. This revelation inspires

the narrator to find his uncle in the Promised Land and to embrace Zionism as an ideology.

Klein was himself a Zionist but he was a particular kind of Zionist. There are many different kinds of Zionism: political, practical, synthetic, religious, etc. The articles collected in *Beyond Sambation* reveal Klein's political feelings toward Israel. M.W. Steinberg describes the novel's relationship to Zionism this way:

The novel is Zionist, but also Religious, for Zionism, in the framework of Klein's novel, is an expression of the Jewish religious spirit... The achievement of the return, made possible in part through the vile agency of the Nazis, gives the author a new insight into the question of evil.

(Popham viii)

Understanding Klein's own complicated relationship to Zionism is important for unpacking the overarching philosophy of *The Second Scroll*. Klein's celebration of the continuity of Jewish culture in Israel was strongly influenced by the teaching of Ahad Ha-'Am ("One of the People," pen name of Asher Ginsberg, 1856-1927). Ahad Ha'am is considered to be the founder of the concept of Cultural Zionism that values Jewish culture and history, including language, over other strains of Zionism especially Political Zionism, which is typically considered to be more hard line and less attuned to the political and cultural realities of the Middle East. Cultural Zionism sought the fulfillment of the national revival of the Jewish People to be achieved by creating a cultural center in the Land of Israel and an educative center to the Jewish Diaspora, which together would be a bulwark against the dangers of assimilation that threaten the existence of the Jewish People.

Klein writes favourably about Ahad Ha'am in his essays and articles. From Ahad Ha-'Am, he learned that Jews are "Jews by genealogy, but also by psychology" (*Beyond Sambation* 5). He learned to revere culture, with tradition as its lifeblood, literature as its finest flower and the poet-prophet as its spokesman: "Judaism does not exist in a vacuum; it grows; it has sources; no one can expect to see the tree splendid with foliage, and at the same time cut out the roots!" (147). He uses Uncle Melech as the symbol of Judaism because, as Monsignor Piersanti explains, "He loves the right word, but he loves righteousness more" (*The Second Scroll* 42). Klein's essays on Ahad Ha-'Am reveal Uncle Melech to be a stand-in figure for the poet. It is revelatory that the narrator combines his quest to find Melech with his quest to discover the true poetry of Israel. He has an equally difficult time finding both. In another letter to A.J.M. Smith, Klein succinctly recounts his goals in writing *The Second Scroll*: Uncle Melech is meant to be a universal symbol of the Jewish experience:

The tale intends to suggest that this sought for messianic personality is an unidentifiable entity made up of the anonymous fractions of total Jewry, in the hour of its great calamity discovering new strength and resource! That is why the tale shows Uncle Melech everywhere suspected, nowhere seen. His photograph – it is a double, a multiple exposure! The search for him runs simultaneous with the search for Israel's poetic principle – they are one and the same. (Mayne 152)

Both the narrator and Uncle Melech can be viewed as Klein proxies. It is no coincidence, then, that both men make a pilgrimage to the Promised Land. Klein, however, takes care

to show that they both go to Israel for vastly different reasons and are met with different results.

The narrator's burgeoning Zionism, it becomes evident, is also the result of the hail of ideological institutions. In this case, the narrator's orthodox education appeals, first and foremost, to his imagination: "I dreamed in dingy Hebrew school the apocalyptic dream of a renewed Zion" (*The Second Scroll* 27). His ideological initiation into Zionism is not achieved solely through educational institutions. The allure of popular culture has just as much of an effect on the narrator as his Hebrew school: "My childhood vision, no doubt the result of a questionable amalgam between Hollywood and Holy Writ, was indeed fulfilled, but not in all its details and particularities" (27). In other words, his initiation into Zionism is part Moses and part Charlton Heston, and he welcomes the establishment of Israel not only because it provides him with an opportunity to meet his mysterious Uncle but also because it reaffirms the twin ideological hails of pop culture and scripture.

The narrator's pilgrimage to Israel would not be a direct trip. Of his own journey, Klein remarked, "It is not easy to get to see Jerusalem. You've got to suffer first" (*Beyond Sambation* 342). Like Klein, the narrator must stop over in Europe before continuing to Israel. Again, the narrator is like the soldiers represented in most war novels whose personalities are shaped by a trip overseas. It is not until he is in Europe that the narrator is prompted to follow his father's lead and assert a distinctly Canadian identity. In the novel's first two sections, the narrator has a blasé attitude toward Canada, especially in comparison to his patriotic father. He waxes poetic about the prospect of a new state in Israel but does not even seem to recognize Canada as his own country: he

says with frustration, “My life was, and is, bound to the country of my father’s choice, to Canada” (*The Second Scroll* 28). In Europe, however, the narrator’s abiding Canadianness becomes evident.

The narrator’s surprising nationalism, no doubt also the product of the power of symbol and ideological institutions, is most obvious during his conversation with the self-styled “polylingual autodidact” Settano. If the coin featuring George V is the central symbol for his father, the narrator is similarly hailed by another capitalist symbol: a bottle of Coca-Cola. When the protagonist orders it, Settano categorizes him as a typical New World capitalist whose religion has been replaced by cultural consumerism. He calls the narrator a “typical emissary of the new religion, a sound, orthodox Cocacolian” (45). The narrator does not balk at this backhanded compliment due to his ideological conditioning and the powerful symbol of the Coca-Cola bottle itself. He takes the opportunity to elaborate upon “the beauty of the Coca-Cola bottle, curved and dusky like some Gauguin painting of a South Sea maiden, upon the purity of its contents, its ubiquity in space, its symbolic evocations – a little torchless Statue of Liberty” (45). From the curves and contents of the Coke bottle, the narrator gleans the freedom of the New World. Like Uncle Melech, he recognizes the significance of symbols but unlike his uncle, he does not distrust or resist their power.

Like his father, who cannot bear to hear his fellow immigrants insult Canada, the narrator is similarly annoyed when Settano begins to dwell on “the superiority of his favoured longitudes” (46). When Settano praises the Old World, the narrator begins “praising Canada as the True North, strong and free, praising, praising, approving everywhere God’s apolitical zones of temperature” (46). In chiding Settano, the narrator

falls back on an obvious ideological apparatus, the Canadian national anthem. Settano's assertion of Old World superiority repulses the narrator's conditioned ideology. In other words, ideology and experience interact. When Settano has the audacity to refer to the narrator as an "Americano," the rebuke is swift: "I am not American. I'm a Canadian" (46). Canada is no longer merely the country of his father's choice but his country as well. Settano asks if there is a difference between Canada and America, wondering if Canada is not just another state. The narrator corrects him again: "On the contrary, The States are our eleventh province!" (46). The Italian episode is the first step for the narrator in reconciling his Canadian identity with his Zionist impulse. This dichotomy is not fully reconciled until the narrator communes with his dead uncle in the Promised Land.

In the final section of the novel, the twin quest of the narrator and his uncle is complete. Unfortunately for the narrator, just as the conflation of Uncle Melech and the people of Israel is achieved, Arab marauders murder Melech. Melech's overarching ideology, the unreliability of image and symbol, is reinforced again by the inability of the narrator to look upon his face at his funeral, "I would never look upon his face. Forever would I have to bear in my mind my own conjured image of Uncle Melech" (91). The narrator's relationship with his uncle never transcends the "I-It" mode. He is robbed of the quintessential Buberian encounter – the "I-You." Ironically, the man who vehemently resisted the power of symbol becomes one to his people and his nephew at the end. It is Uncle Melech's transformation into a symbol of Jewish struggle that gives the narrator the impetus to recognize his own ideology and how it differs from that of his idolized uncle's. Two images of Jewish Diaspora emerge. Although both quests are

essentially for the self and both end in Israel, they are not identical. Melech's quest represents the history of Jews in the twentieth-century and his individual identity is merged with all of Judaism – he is prophet, symbol, and martyr. In Israel, he finally found his identity, his home, and his final resting place. He witnesses what he describes in a letter to his nephew as “Aught from naught” (37), creation from chaos, the miracle of the return.

The narrator, on the other hand, has a different experience. At the end of *The Second Scroll*, the narrator performs the Kaddish for his uncle, “with pride, for it was flesh of my flesh that was here being exalted. The name that had once rung for me with angel pennies was resounding now to the conning of a new alphabet. It was my kinsman's name” (93). The narrator is comforted because, for him, Israel is now understood and Uncle Melech is finally understood – “I had found the key image” (87). The history of his family and his people are taken up into himself and his own mythic identity can now be integrated into his real Canadian one.

In his contemporary review, Malcolm Ross writes, “This is a compelling book and which gives Canadians some right to feel adult... In exploring the final dimension of his spiritual heritage Klein makes it ours” (234). When the old man at the Synagogue marvels that Canada is “a great distance” from Israel, the narrator replies, “With the aeroplane it is not so great a difference” (*The Second Scroll* 88). The rapprochement between his Canadian and Jewish identity is more than geographical; it is cathartic and ideological, “as Canadians, we take our life from the fruitful collision and interpretation of many inheritances... It is not the item but the *pattern* which is Canadian” (Ross 234). The narrator is ideologically hailed back to the New World because he knows that he

belongs with his father, mother, the Union Jack, Coca-Cola, and the coins of King George V. Like a soldier in a war novel, he is able to return home.

Klein and Birney began the 1950s with the hope that writing about personal responsibility and the soldier's existential alienation could save war writing from the impulse to nationalize war's tragedy. By the end of the decade, however, MacLennan returned with *The Watch that Ends the Night* (1959) to reassert the potential for war to serve as Canada's founding myth. Unlike *Barometer Rising*, *The Watch That Ends The Night* approaches war retrospectively. Its aim, however, is the same. It has a more sensitive approach to trauma and Jerome Martel's arc in the novel is tragic, but MacLennan cannot help but see the potential for catharsis in war's slaughter. As he did with the First World War, MacLennan depicts the Second World War as a catalyst for Canada's renewal:

While the war thundered on, Canada unnoticed grew into a nation at last. This cautious country which had always done more than she had been promised, had always endured in silence while others reaped the glory – now she became alive and to us within her excitedly so... I even persuaded myself that here I had found the thing larger than myself to which I could belong. (317)

One could be forgiven for wondering how many wars it might take before Canada is finally able to assert itself as an independent nation. How many more soldiers might have to die? Yet, this type of thinking served a purpose and proved to be incredibly popular. Testament to the appeal of constructing war as a transformative and potentially redemptive experience, even the German translation of *The Watch That Ends the Night* sold 250 000 copies (Webb *Occupants of Memory* 119). The novels gave Canadians,

deflated from decades of hardship and war, permission to hope that their adversity had meant something; they allowed for the possibility of measured triumph. Ultimately, MacLennan was prescient and his vision of Canada, his blueprint, would become mainstream.

Lester B. Pearson's election and regime marked a distinct departure from the Canadian values of the war and post-war era. This shift was cemented semiotically by the changing of the Canadian flag in 1965. Pearson even called the new flag a symbol of "our new nationalism" (Champion 69). Peter C. Newman hailed it as the "transfer of power from one generation to the next" and "a triumph of the Canadian present over the Canadian past" (qtd. in Champion 69). The flag change consolidated forward-thinking Canadianism at the expense of an outmoded British version of Canada. Not every Canadian was in favour of the change; John Diefenbaker wrote that the new government was "determined to bring down all of our traditions" (70). MacLennan saw these developments early and strived to write them into being. Unfortunately, his didacticism came at the expense of a more humane and realistic portrayal of the Canadian soldier. In better war novels, like McDougall's *Execution*, for which MacLennan served as first editor, the possibility for redemption returns but, as in *Turvey* and *The Second Scroll*, it is depoliticized and individual rather than national and collective.

CHAPTER THREE

The Vulture Fear: Christian Existentialism in Colin McDougall's *Execution*

Since winning the 1958 Governor General's Award, Colin McDougall's only novel, *Execution*, has been critically neglected despite the richness of a text that provides ample critical avenues into Canadian war literature. Webb calls the novel the "only masterpiece among Canadian Second World War novels" (*Occupants of Memory* 163). Novak praises *Execution* as "arguably the best Canadian novel about the Second World War" (112). Yet, little has been made of the novel's complicated representation of wartime ethics. Even less has been made of the novel's existential underpinnings. In the novel, Padre Doorn, a military pastor, comes face to face with an existential realization: "The Padre stared unremittingly at the sky, waiting for the parley to open – and nothing happened. Nothing except air burst" (145). McDougall's explicit allusions to existentialists like Franz Kafka seem to indicate that McDougall wishes *Execution* to be read within the complex and multifaceted tradition of existential fiction. The novel's ending, however, which features a proxy crucifixion complicates this interpretation since novels within that tradition, like Sartre's *Nausea* or Camus's *The Stranger*, do not typically allow for any kind of spiritual transcendence. Understanding this seemingly irreconcilable tension means eschewing the dominant form of midcentury existentialism characterized by Sartre and Camus, or even Birney, in favour of one of the philosophy's foundational figures. A close reading of *Execution*, considering the formative texts of existentialism, and a comparative reading of works by its international influences, including Kafka, Herman Melville, and William Faulkner, reveals a valuable theoretical matrix for parsing the difficult philosophy of this neglected novel. *Execution* accords with an earlier form of

existentialism, one that predates the philosophical school's consensus atheism, articulated primarily by Søren Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling* (1843).

Execution is about a group of young Canadian soldiers during the Italian Campaign of the Second World War. It is bookended by two executions. As they make their way towards the Hitler Line, the Canadian 2nd Rifles take on two harmless Italian deserters to cook for the Canadian soldiers despite the orders of the platoon's commanding officer, Brigadier Kildare, that all deserters be shot on sight. When he discovers this insubordination, he orders that the men be executed. The novel's main characters, John Adam and Padre Doorn, must "acquiesce" to the execution, prompting an identity crisis for both men. Adam tries to forget his sin by becoming a hyper-competent soldier but is unable to fill the "aching emptiness inside himself" (49). Doorn has a nervous breakdown and becomes obsessed with finding pieces of the True Cross in his attempt to grasp at authentic Christianity. Later, a member of the Company, the cognitively challenged but good-hearted Jones, is arrested as the scapegoat for the murder of an American soldier and, due to political pressure, sentenced to death. Adam and Doorn see this as an opportunity to redeem themselves for their previous crime. Their attempts to free Jones, however, are unsuccessful but this new killing somehow atones for the first, and *Execution* ends on a note of optimism.

The ending is confounding, given *Execution*'s allusions to existential works, because existentialism typically postulates that the absence of a transcendent force in the universe results in absolute freedom because the individual is entirely responsible for his or her own actions; it is the responsibility of the individual to create an ethos outside of societal or religious constructs. As Sartre writes, "Man is nothing else but which he

makes of himself” (291). For Steve Lukits, *Execution*’s ending “strains its credulity” because it “provides a melodramatic answer to the character’s moral despair” (80). Lukits is unable to reconcile “Jones’ calm acceptance of his sacrificial role” with the novel’s earlier more realistic scenes of violence and accountability (80). Lukits’s concerns gets at the most difficult question about the novel – why does *Execution*, an existential novel seemingly marked by the absence of God, end with a de-facto crucifixion?

When read in the context of Kierkegaard’s *Fear and Trembling*, *Execution*’s central philosophical tension, the opposing forces of existentialism and Christianity, is easier to reconcile. As intimated in the previous chapter, existentialism is not a wholly coherent philosophy. Walter Kaufmann argues that existentialism is not a philosophy at all, “but a label for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy...

Existentialism is not a school of thought nor reducible to any set of tenets” (11).

Therefore, its contrarian nature means that existentialism’s many opposing worldviews can exist under the same umbrella. *Execution*, then, can productively be read using the major premises of Kierkegaard’s Christian existentialism. McDougall’s depiction of Padre Doorn’s quest for the True Cross, as well as the execution of Jones take on new meaning when read in tandem with the religious existential philosophy espoused in *Fear and Trembling*.

McDougall does not reference Kierkegaard in the novel itself in the same way he does Kafka. An examination of the Colin McDougall Archive, housed in the McGill Rare Books Special Collections Department, helps to establish a link between the Canadian veteran and the melancholy Dane. The “archive,” really just a battered banker’s box haphazardly stuffed with notes, some letters, and a notebook, sheds significant light on

McDougall's efforts to transmute his own war experience onto the page. McDougall's notebook spans the five-to-six year time period it took him to complete the novel.

Described initially as "a running record of the battle to [write]," the notebook transforms into a vehicle for McDougall's fears, insecurities, and everyday neuroses as well as a meditation on the particular difficulties of writing a war novel (*Notebook* 16/05/53).

McDougall, himself a veteran, wrote in 1952 that he hoped that writing the novel would result in a "purging of the whole war experience" (*Loose-leaf Notes*). During a bout of writer's block, he expresses his desire to "settle on all the unbearably sad, aching, tender things I want to say about war, men at war, and write them down" (*Notebook* 11/04/53).

The unpredictable nature of McDougall's state of mind in the notebook stands in sharp contrast to the notebook itself, which is organized with military precision. Between late 1954 and early 1956, however, he stops writing altogether with no explanation.

Why did McDougall never write again? The McDougall fonds offer unprecedented access to the harrowing process of representing war from experience. In the last half of the twentieth century, veteran-penned novels have proven to be a lightning rod for postmodern critics like Fussel and Cobley. The humble box of McDougall paraphernalia in Montreal serves as a crucial antidote to this way of thinking and reveals the process of writing war to be a complex one, characterized by guilt, responsibility and anxiety.

McDougall was born in Montreal in 1917 and, except for his deployment in Italy during the Second World War, lived there for his entire life. Immediately after achieving his B.A. from McGill University in 1940, he enrolled in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. While overseas, Major Colin McDougall excelled as a soldier and was

recommended for a Distinguished Service Order three times, winning it in 1945 after a strong recommendation from his men. The recommendation describes his heroism:

This officer has twice before been recommended for gallantry in operations. He has proved at all times to be a most dashing and fearless officer of great skill and determination. This has been a real inspiration as example to his men, and largely responsible for the success of his company. (DSO)

These exploits are conspicuously absent from the archive. In fact, there is little evidence of McDougall's military career at all. In fact, he reminds himself often to guard against slipping into autobiography. It is certain, however, that some of his experience in the Canadian campaign in Italy did provide inspiration for *Execution*. After returning to Canada, McDougall took a position at his Alma Mater, which would be his place of employment for the rest of his life, serving as counselor, registrar, and secretary general. His relationship with McGill explains why his journal and personal correspondences are housed in the McGill Rare Books Special Collections Department. *Execution* was his only novel, though he did publish several short stories in *Macleans* and *New Liberty* magazine. One short story, "The Firing Squad," won the *Macleans* fiction contest, the President's Medal from the University of Western Ontario, and provides the basic structure for *Execution*.

The McDougall archive features a cache of letters from famous authors heaping praise on McDougall. Journalist Gregory Clark wrote of *Execution*, "I cannot help but remind you that trying to put War into a book, as Tolstoy and many another found out, is close to impossible. How then, in 227 pages you have effected the epic and tragic sense I cannot for the life of me figure out" (Clark). Farley Mowat wrote to McDougall, "I am

not sure whether to curse or bless you.” *Execution* caused Mowat to “suffer from an emotion which is a rarity with me – jealousy of another writer. It is, however, the right kind of jealousy. I simply wish to heaven that I had written the book... *Execution* is the closest approximation of the matter I have encountered.” Citing his own desire to write a war novel, Mowat laments that “*Execution* probably makes the novel which has haunted me superfluous – so in a sense you have freed me from my incubus. On the other hand I shall miss my devil” (Mowat). Fellow war novelist and personal friend Hugh MacLennan, who served as the de-facto editor of the later drafts of *Execution*, praised the novel and looked to the future: “Your difficulty, of course it is every writer’s difficulty will be with the books you write after this. I’ll be fascinated to know what they will be like” (MacLennan). The prolific MacLennan never read McDougall’s second attempt at a novel because other than a pedestrian article on Canadians at Vimy Ridge, McDougall never wrote for publication again. Despite awards, accolades, and acclaim, he would never complete or, according to the available evidence, attempt a second novel.

McDougall’s notebook entries suggest that the particular responsibilities of writing a war novel played a role in his subsequent literary silence. In the journal’s first entry, despair has already slipped into his consciousness: “The despair that came today in the dining room of the Faculty Club when the question rioted to my mind: ‘But what can anyone say about man’s plight, about life? It is deadening to think that even the greatest works can say so little. Is it worth trying to say anything?’” At first, he rationalizes his despair and tries to see it as a positive for the writing process: “At least [the despair] points to how primitive and universal this work should be, a work of man’s agony of triumph.” He soon realizes this rationalization is an equivocation and shifts his point of

view to one of sad resignation: “those who live contented, useful lives have long since decided the matter insoluble and dismissed it from their immediate consciousness.

Anyway, there is nothing to be gained by brooding on the metaphysics of the thing”

(09/04/53). The rest of the journal entries reveal this statement to be false resignation.

McDougall is never able to shake the despair that causes him to question what one writer, even an ex-soldier, can ultimately say about war:

Well, do I mistrust the concept? No, not at all – I think it is real and valid. It is my own ability to organize and phrase it in the best possible terms for itself that I seem to doubt. But the answer to this is simple: I can only write and visualize both as I am. I cannot always be chasing ideals, and visions of perfection. No writer can – successfully. I can only think and write to my own best ability at the given time. The result may be a great work; it may not; but it is all I can do, and what I must do. (Loose-leaf notes)

This preoccupation anticipates later postmodern concerns about historical verisimilitude and the ethics of representing war. It also demonstrates a self-awareness that is rarely acknowledged among war writers.

Despite veering between confidence and despair, McDougall is explicit about what he wants to achieve with *Execution*. No one could accuse him of not being ambitious:

[The novel] is to be successful – both as a work of art and commercially. To be read, and bought, as much in Tucson, Ariz. as in Montreal. It is to be great. More than a novel, it is to be a work. A complete work of art which is also a smash hit on the best seller list. (Loose-leaf notes)

Even a cursory examination of the McDougall Papers reveals this moment of unabashed confidence to be an anomaly. In asking himself why he wants to write the novel, he reveals the intensely personal stakes of this enterprise for him and is characteristically humble:

Because I have to. I have to write and after reflection, it is clear the novel is the most effective and satisfying form. I have to write to fulfill myself: it is the most important function in the world to me. I have to write, and write successfully, to find pride in myself. More than this, it is the only way I can make any real contribution to the life to which I was born. With all humility, this is the way in which I can help to better the world. It must be a pure kind of striving, and there I will find my satisfaction and salvation. I have to write to be the best man I can be.

(Loose-leaf notes)

According to the notebook, *Execution* was only a working title, with *Amos*, *Amas*, *Amat* and *Men at War* considered as possible “serious titles” (15/05/53). From the beginning to the completion of the novel’s writing, the concept of execution with its double meaning in wartime was always the central theme of the novel that would eventually retain its working title to reflect its significance to the text. In the notebook’s section on “Theme,” McDougall states, “The execution is the execution of man. The execution is the evil of the story. In the background there is the daily ‘execution’ of the fighting soldiers; in the foreground this particular execution. This must be so if it is to be true to its title, to trust its unity and its circular storyline” (16/03/53) Yet, is it not incongruous for a novel that purports to be about “execution,” in both its forms, as the central evil of war to restore moral order to the world of the novel through an execution?

The notebook attempts to resolve this central tension. For McDougall, the novel's themes came down to what he considered to be a "profound distinction" (Loose-leaf notes). For him, there were only two views of humanity, one characterized by Guy de Maupassant, "These poor devils are human," and the other characterized by F. Scott Fitzgerald: "These poor humans are bedeviled." McDougall sided with the Frenchman.

The notebook also reveals what McDougall was reading while conceiving and composing *Execution*. The notebook is littered with famous names like Evelyn Waugh, William Faulkner, and Herman Melville. Although Waugh's paeans to glory, like much of his *Sword of Honour* trilogy, are satirized in the novel's opening sections, it is Faulkner and Melville who are most thematically present in *Execution*. Jones has an obvious analog in Faulkner's Benjy from *The Sound and the Fury*. Both are cognitively challenged and both take on allegorical Christ-like significance. McDougall writes in his notes that his "intention" in writing *Execution* was "to be affirmative – an act of faith (as Faulkner)" (*Preliminary Notes*). McDougall was also reading Melville's *Billy Budd* (1924). The parallels between Billy's senseless execution and Jones's are obvious. Both executions are clear Christian allegories and provide the surviving characters with transcendent catharsis. Both men expire with surprising calm and provide comfort to their executioners. Billy Budd cries out, "God bless Captain Vere!" (124), whereas Jones tells Adam, "Please don't worry about me. I am not afraid" (259).

The affinity between both these American authors and Kierkegaard's philosophy has been long established. Jamie Lorentzen devotes the entirety of his book, *Sober Cannibals, Drunken Christians: Melville, Kierkegaard, and Tragic Optimism in Polarized Works*, to the shared worldview of the *Moby Dick* author and Kierkegaard,

writing that their “processes inform each other’s works in scores of remarkable ways” (12). In his *Kierkegaard and Faulkner*, George Bedell makes a similar argument, writing that “Faulkner once [said]... ‘I am telling the same story over and over, which is myself and the world...the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself,’ which is Faulkner’s way of talking about what Kierkegaard considers the religious problem” (7-8).

For Kierkegaard, the power of the author (like Melville, Faulkner, McDougall, and himself) “lies on the boundary of the esthetic and in the direction of the religious... The lifeview is the way out, and the story is the way” (*Two Ages* 14). It is at the confluence of literature, ethics, and Christianity that McDougall takes his place with Melville, Faulkner, and Kierkegaard. Allusions to Kafka make it easy to characterize *Execution* as another atheistic and cynical war novel in the vein of *Catch 22* (1961) or *The Thin Red Line*. To do so, however, fails to incorporate the novel’s continuity with an earlier form of existentialism, which still allowed for the presence of a transcendent force and redemption. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard provides four different retellings of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac in order to show that redemption is possible in sacrifice. For Kierkegaard, the term “ethics” has more than one meaning. In its primary sense, “ethics” is synonymous with the Hegelian notion of prevailing social norms. Kierkegaard reconciles the tension between ethics and religion, embodied in the Abraham parable, by invoking what he calls the “teleological suspension of the ethical” (41).

This teleological suspension is the proverbial leap of faith. Kierkegaard argues that Abraham must sacrifice Isaac “for God’s sake, and (in complete identity with this) for his own sake” (41). George Price writes, “What is at stake in the book is Abraham’s self, his struggle *to be*... [He] is therefore the paradigm for every individual who finds

himself at the frontier of ethics” (192). Kierkegaard argues that, in deciding to kill his son for God, Abraham was ethically wrong but religiously right. Much of *Fear and Trembling* turns on the notion that Abraham’s would-be sacrifice of his son Isaac is not for the sake of social norms but rather a duty to something higher than both his social duty not to kill an innocent person and his personal commitment to his son. In other words, Abraham’s duty is to the Absolute (God) and not to the Universal (ethics). This recognition and sacrifice elevate him to what Kierkegaard terms a “Knight of Faith.” He acted not under the belief that God must always be obeyed but rather under the assumption that God would not ask Abraham to do something unethical.

It is not difficult to extrapolate Abraham’s plight to those of the Canadian soldiers in *Execution*. They must acquiesce to senseless violence, at great personal expense, for the “universal” ethic at the behest of powerful forces like the military, nationalism, and bureaucracy. The mechanized death of the wars of the twentieth century means that soldiers must justify their actions in a unique ethical context, a context difficult to duplicate in civilian life. Within this ethical paradigm, Adam, Doorn, and the rest must themselves become Knights of Faith and find a way to assert that they remain ethical beings. Ultimately, *Execution*, like *Generals Die in Bed*, is a philosophical meditation on what it means to act ethically under constraint. For Warren Cariou, “the men of McDougall’s Italian campaign are something like Beckett’s characters Vladimir and Estragon, except that they must try to find meaning not through waiting, but through obeying” (273). In other words, when is killing another human being justified? In its opening lines, *Execution* foregrounds this difficult question with Krasnick’s steadfast refusal, “I ain’t gonna shoot no horses!” (3). Although he does not express any ethical

qualms about killing Germans, he implicitly knows where to draw the ethical line.

Krasnick's dilemma demonstrates how war alters the moral life of otherwise good men.

The existential and ethical conflict found in the novel was inspired by a real-life incident. The Canadian military long maintained that it had not executed any of its own men during the Second World War. On July 5th 1945, however, months after the war was over, twenty-three-year-old Private Harold Pringle was executed by firing squad for military crimes.

After his father's discharge for poor eyesight, Pringle became a disciplinary problem, going AWOL several times. After the battle of the Hitler Line, which incidentally is the climactic battle in *Execution*, he likely suffered from post-traumatic stress. He once again went AWOL to Rome where he took up with a gang of small-time smugglers. Its criminal success was short-lived due to excessive drinking and squabbling. Eventually, one of its members was shot dead and all members of the gang were arrested. At the trial, one gang member testified against the rest in exchange for immunity; Pringle was found guilty and sentenced to death (Clark *A Keen Soldier* 287).

Pringle's life and death are examined in Andrew Clark's *A Keen Soldier: The Execution of Second World War Private Harold Joseph Pringle* (2002). There is no mention of Pringle in the McDougall Papers, and it is not known how much McDougall heard through the military grapevine, though the similarities between Pringle and Jones are too conspicuous to be coincidence. McDougall repurposes Pringle's story and transforms it from a senseless bureaucratic tragedy into something else.

In re-appropriating Pringle's tragedy, McDougall engages with Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism. Kierkegaard argues that people live on three plains of existence,

the aesthetic (living for one's self), the ethical (living for others), and the religious (living for God) (*Fear and Trembling* 78). Characters in *Execution* embody these plains.

Kierkegaard's Christian Existentialism has three major premises. The first is Kierkegaard's calling of the masses back to a more genuine form of Christianity. For him, the type of Christianity that existed in the decades following the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the most pure and unadulterated time for the religion. By his own time, however, he believed that the New Testament concept of love had been perverted. The second premise equates God and Love. According to *Fear and Trembling*, to engage in the act of loving is to approach the divine. The final premise of Christian existentialism involves the undoing of evil acts (redemption).

Kierkegaard's desire to see Christianity revert back to the purity of the decades immediately after Christ's crucifixion is embodied by Padre Doorn's quest for pieces of the True Cross, which serves as the central metaphor for Christianity in the novel. At the beginning, Padre Doorn firmly believes in the holy nature of war. The Canadian soldiers he served with and had grown to love and respect were doing God's work: "It was sacrilege to think that those strong young bodies, created in God's image, might be smashed or maimed, flung lifeless on a Sicilian beach. In the whites of their eyes tonight he had seen their closeness to God; these were dedicated men, these were *crusaders*" (10). As in Connor's Romantic novels, martial language and religious language are indistinguishable in Doorn's early rhetoric. Doorn is unable to reconcile his early and naïve vision with the horrific scene he witnesses in the barnyard where these "crusaders" kill two innocents; this causes a crisis of faith for him and, as for Adam, a crisis of self. In the novel's second section, Padre Doorn occupies a liminal space between life and death:

“As for Padre Doorn, the man had simply become a graveyard ghoul” (49). He is forced to re-evaluate his entire worldview, pushing him to the brink of madness and his own existential quest.

As Doorn approaches the chapel of St. Agatha in the hopes of recovering bits of the True Cross, he is in a religious trance: “The Padre’s eyes were on fire. His gaze at the gleaming reliquary was devouring, consuming, as though in glance he celebrated visual Mass” (107). The chapel contains what he believes he needs to save himself and, indeed, all of Christianity: “That reliquary held doom and salvation, life and death - everything... Inside the case was the object marking the end of his search... He walked into the blaze of sacramental light” (107). Yet, his mission accomplished, Doorn is still met with a suffocating nothingness as he thrusts the True Cross at the sky and God. As he walks to the battlefield, the Padre makes an impassioned declaration: “No – there must be no more execution!” (144). This will not be the case. Doorn erroneously equates the gathering of aesthetic objects with sacrifice.

When read allegorically, the sacrifice of Jones takes on both New and Old Testament significance. He is both Jesus and Isaac. It is no coincidence that General Ian Kildare is ultimately responsible for both executions by ordering the first execution and acquiescing to the second due to political pressure. In the beginning, the braggart soldier seems to be the sole bastion of individuality with his personal charisma and Balmoral cap, which is strictly against regulation. He is, however, revealed to be an ambitious bureaucrat and not always the best judge of character. He privileges aesthetics over essence. When he meets Jones, a man who looks like the ideal soldier and does exactly as he is told, Kildare laughs, “See that? A damn fine soldier” (21). Cariou points out

Kildare's error: "Jones is anything but a fine soldier, precisely because he obeys every order unthinkingly" (274). Jones's total lack of self-awareness means that he is one of the few characters in the novel not suffering an existential crisis.

Major Bazin, the novel's most explicitly existential character, is not so lucky. His existential and cynical worldview is confirmed when he takes a position as a military prison guard. Adam describes Bazin as being "grotesquely misemployed" in this endeavour. Bazin agrees and describes the prison as "purest Kafka": "To myself I call it *Der Strafkolonie* [sic], and I recognize, of course, that I am the principal prisoner... I have at last, you see, found my vocation in life: I am commandant of a Field Punishment Camp. I have a Sergeant descended from Captain Bligh, and an Adjutant straight out of Stendhal" (152). The reference to Kafka serves as another example of the connection between *Execution* and *Fear and Trembling*. Kafka's "In the Penal Colony" is about the last use of an elaborate torture and execution device that carves a sentence onto the prisoner's arm before letting him die. The device has fallen out of favour with the new Commandant of the penal colony who has banned the machine. The Officer is nostalgic for the old brand of justice delivered by the machine and lobbies the new Commandant to reverse his decision and reinstate the machine. His efforts unsuccessful, The Officer puts himself in the machine and is impaled with "Be Just" tattooed on his arm.

The way in which The Officer describes the physical appearance of the machine indicates that his affinity for it has as much to do with aesthetics as ideology. Danielle Allen writes, "The officer's gestures establish a context for judging his beloved Commandant's apparatus: it should be viewed, or read, as a work of art" (327). In his fetishization of the aesthetic, The Officer is like Kildare. The technological allure and

absolutism of the torture device override even the most basic forms of human decency. Kafka's correspondence with Max Brod shows that Kafka had read *Fear and Trembling* before writing "In the Penal Colony" and "felt that Kierkegaard's writing deepened his own understanding of ethical individualism" (Heidsieck 134).

Kafka's Officer does not have to "acquiesce" to execution because he believes it to "be just" every time. The Canadian troops in Italy do not have this luxury because they cannot fully give themselves over to the mechanisms of the military. The fact that they were executing an order is of little comfort to them. Bazin may be the Commandant of a prison but he is nothing like The Officer: "This *Strafekolonie* [sic]... is a minor beach-head of hell" (153). Kildare, like his proxy The Officer, is also the Area Commander of this new prison. Bazin recognizes the artifice behind Kildare's persona: "Ian Kildare, recovered from his wounds, and now apparently the darling of Canada since the newspapers told of his gallant charge to the bagpipes" (153). The reader knows that Kildare's heroism at the Hitler Line was at least part performance. His bagpiper was a Jewish soldier named Cohen, not a Scot named Fergus: "Both men were actors. They had created a rare character role between them: that of laird and gillie; and now Brigadier Kildare wanted to see if Fergus would play his part to the end" (137).

Kildare, however, is as multi-faceted as the other soldiers in the novel. It is testament to McDougall's skills and depth as a writer that even his straw men are complex. His name may betray him as a Waugh-like military caricature but he is three-dimensional – he struggles against execution even if he must acquiesce to it. He vehemently opposes charging the Hitler Line, believing it to be a suicide mission, before eventually relenting to his superiors. He makes a crucial misjudgment of Jones but

promotes Adam, a fine leader, while firing Dodd, an incompetent one. He agrees to commute Jones's sentence but is overruled by his superiors. Kildare's charge at the Hitler Line, with its accompanying bagpipes, is emblematic of his character. He is part sincerity and part performance. For Webb, "Kildare is in the same position as the men under him: bound to carry out orders, no matter how unethical they might be, yet determined to preserve whatever shreds of humanity remain available to him" (173). It is this sophisticated view of military authority that differentiates *Execution* from previously anti-authoritarian Canadian war novels like *Generals Die in Bed*.

Adam wonders to himself, "What would happen to Jones in a Field Punishment Camp?" (153). He does not have to wait long before Jones must confront his own execution without knowing why. The Sergeant assigned to hold Jones is unable to reconcile the double meaning of execution either: "Up north, men were being killed every day; their life was regarded as precious; every effort was made to preserve each life – but back here this band of soldiers was assembled for the sole purpose of killing one of their number. Like all the others he could not help feeling it was wrong, in some basic, indefinable way" (226). It is hard not to read these lines as an indictment of the Canadian military for the execution of Private Harold Pringle.

"In the Penal Colony" shares even more in common with the short story on which *Execution* is based, "The Firing Squad." Written in 1951, "The Firing Squad" won several awards including First Prize in the *Maclean's* fiction contest. In "The Firing Squad," it is Jones again who stands to be executed. Adam is present as well, this time as a soldier who "had cracked wide open; he had cried his fear and panic to the world; he had run screaming from the battle through the ranks of his white faced men" (McDougall

“The Firing Squad” 28). In order to recoup his old status and manhood, Adam agrees to serve as Jones’s executioner. He is so touched by Jones’s natural innocence and naïveté, however, that he cannot carry out his orders and execute Jones. At the end of “The Firing Squad,” Jones is alive and Adam is taken into custody. This ending robs the novel of its difficult existential ending wherein Adam, Doorn, and the rest must make meaning out of an inherently meaningless act.

McDougall laboured over the execution of Jones as the ending of the novel for months. He vacillated between the tragic redemptive ending of *Execution* and a more traditionally uplifting one. In his original conception of the ending, the novel loses its signature “terrible touch.” McDougall preferred a more traditional, happy ending for Jones: “New ending sounds better: Padre saves Jones by retracting his evidence. They drive up north together” (15/05/53). The road to redemption is metaphorically referred to numerous times in his notebook as “the drive up north with calm of mind (catharsis)” (25/04/53). Without Jones’s sacrifice, however, the sins of the Canadian military in Italy are never absolved and moral order is not restored.

The time immediately after the sacrifice of Jones is one of contemplation and restored faith. Adam says, “I don’t know why but I feel alright now. And yet, I thought – I believed – when the execution was over everything would be over” (260). Adam is one with humanity: “Today he felt himself to exist at the central suffering of all humanity. He was filled with a huge compassion and love and understanding for every man who had ever lived” (269). Having failed to see Him on the battlefield with the True Cross, Padre Doorn even returns to God cured of the selfish hypocrisy that plagued him at the beginning of the novel: “It seemed to Adam that the Padre looked younger. Why, he

looks like a man of God again, Adam thought, one who has been away, and has at last returned” (263). This restoration of faith in God for Doorn and personal regeneration for Adam are the gifts Jones gives them through sacrifice.

In Kierkegaard’s reading of Abraham and Isaac, Abraham had enough faith to trust that God would not make him kill his son, although he was prepared to do so. In *Execution*, the characters also have their faith tested. Padre Doorn has his religious faith tested while Adam’s faith in the structure of the military is also tested. Adam teleologically suspends his ethical code when he decides to give up his quest to free Jones in order to provide comfort to him in his final hours: “He saw that there was only one possible course of action: and that was to stay with Jones until the end, and envelop him with a cocoon of protection” (251). Major Bazin laments, “Perhaps it is man’s plight to acquiesce” (115). The concept of acquiescence in *Execution* stands in for Kierkegaard’s concept of the leap of faith. Bazin concludes that recognizing your own acquiescence might be enough to save your soul: “even recognizing execution as the evil may be victory of sorts; struggling against it may be the closest man ever comes to victory” (115). Unlike with Isaac, no angel interferes on behalf of Jones. He must die because it is not enough, as Bazin hopes, to recognize one’s own compromises.

Ultimately, *Execution* examines whether it is possible to follow orders ethically. The command structure of the military is predicated upon an equivocation of responsibility. You simply do as you are commanded. For soldiers, whose sole reason for being is to follow orders, “execution” goes beyond capital punishment to represent a state of being. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Arendt insists that moral choice remains even under oppressive structures like the military or totalitarianism: “[U]nder conditions of terror

most people will comply but *some people will not*, just as the lesson of the countries to which the Final Solution was proposed is that ‘it could happen’ in most places but *it did not happen everywhere*” (135). Given Arendt’s reasoning, the age-old equivocation, “I was just following orders,” is wholly insufficient.

Set adrift and numbed by the execution of the two Italians, Adam strives to be the best at following orders and does not engage his moral consciousness until an encounter with an Italian prostitute, Elena, in the town of Bari. Adam repeats “*Io Ti amo*” to Elena in order to prevent her from feeling like a commodity, and these words have a significant impact on him as well: “It was pretence, but he had given her something; and, oddly, he felt better at once as though he had also given something to himself” (102). He continues, “*Io ti amo*... He knew they meant something of immense significance; at this moment they were the only words in the world that mattered” (102). His encounter with Elena shocks Adam out of the cycle of denial and efficiency: “There was only one difference in his state before and after Bari. Now he was aware of the emptiness inside him: and he knew that not all his competence, nor all his passion of concern for the men of his Company would ever suffice to fill it” (108). Adam’s display in Bari is pure performance, the performance of love, but it has a profound impact on him. In this episode, McDougall, like Klein in *The Second Scroll*, invokes Pascal’s formula for belief: “Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe” (Althusser 114). Ideologies are lived experiences. Performing the ritual of love has a genuine effect on Adam and Elena. Love insinuates itself into his identity through pretence and performance.

The key word in the exchange between Elena and Adam is “*amo*” – love.

Adam’s encounter with the Italian sex worker is problematic but, nevertheless, accords

with Kierkegaard's philosophy. According to Kierkegaard, the act of loving was the closest any individual could get to the divine. Therefore, while Padre Doorn attempts to approach God by retrieving the True Cross, Adam has more success through even the illusion of love. Bazin recognizes the power of love even if it is too late to save him: "There was less in him to change: he had lost his saints when he was very young; long ago he had made his compromises" (50). Yet, Bazin cynically conjugates the verb to love as he fires at the enemy: "'Amo' said Major Bunny Bazin, snapping the bolt of his rifle closed. 'I love.' ... 'Amas,' ... 'You love'" (109). He asks Adam, "Tell me, do you know any better way of passing the afternoon than to lie at ease sniping at the enemy, while conjugating the verb 'to love,' and drinking the best issue Egyptian rum? Hell, it's the vocation I've been searching for all my life" (110). Bazin has been through much the same experience as Adam but reaches a different conclusion. He may have given in to cynicism but he still encourages Adam: "Maybe you found something in Bari – something stronger than the other thing. Whatever it was, hang on to it – *believe* in it" (116). This statement is Bazin's tacit confession that his way of coping with the random brutality of war may not be the only way. Love may be another way. Thanks to Adam, even Bazin is optimistic, "*Amabo, amabis, amabit...* We'll love in all the future inflexions too" (109).

Padre Doorn's search for the True Cross and Adam's declaration of love accord with the first two premises of Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism. The execution of Jones is congruous with Kierkegaard's third premise: the undoing of evil acts. Significantly, however, the final execution of Jones functions in much the same way as the performance of love between Elena and Adam. It is a "ceremonial performance Adam

creates in order to transform the act of execution from the most vicious, pointless slaughter to something else... The execution is really a ritual of love, in which *amo* becomes ammo, and Jones becomes a Christ-like figure who does not die in vain because the ceremony of his death enables the moral salvation of others” (Cariou 277). It is not a surprise when, after Jones’s execution, Adam observes that each of the Canadian soldiers “was changed, in a sense, perhaps, restored to whatever they had been before Sicily” (*Execution* 263). The “vulture fear” that had haunted Adam leaves him as well when he observes a “large bird, wings a-whirr, shot from its branch, and went speeding in a tight spiral to the top of the sky; it became a black dot, and then it disappeared” (27). Jones provides what Ronald Sutherland calls “the vital pretense” by which those who witness his bureaucratic execution are able to achieve some sort of victory (28).

Like Klein’s *The Second Scroll*, *Execution* is also illuminated by Kierkegaard’s comic-philosophical novel *Repetition* because McDougall’s novel is also characterized by repetitions and reiterations. For Kierkegaard, a sense of peace can be gained from repetitions and reenactments, provided one is able to learn from his or her repetitions and strive for epiphany. It can be a way out of trauma.

McDougall, a war veteran who strove to purge himself of his experience through writing, was understandably drawn to these philosophical questions. Kierkegaard scholar Edward F. Mooney writes, “Repetition is epiphany that sometimes grants the old again, as new, and sometimes grants something radically new” (viii). Therefore, within this complex paradigm, it is somehow possible for one execution to atone for another. Repeating past behaviour can yield new knowledge provided those involved do not lapse into intellectual and ethical laziness, as Adam and Doorn do after the first execution.

Jones's death is different than the execution of the Italians because the characters closest to the act, Adam and Doorn, are different. They no longer try to stifle their culpability with competence or trinkets but rather strive for honest epiphany. Therefore, McDougall's project is the same as Kierkegaard's and, indeed, Faulkner's. He repeats the same story again and again as Kierkegaard does with the parable of Abraham and Isaac, not in a vicious cycle of recidivism, but in order to find a new direction forward. Critics of this often-overlooked novel may do the same and strive for new interpretations in order to provide what the novel promises – regeneration and renewal.

McDougall does not devote a great deal of space in the journal to the idea of style. He writes that he wants *Execution* to be “as tightly organized as a good short story” (16/05/53). The author to whom McDougall's style would most often be compared in contemporary reviews or his personal correspondences is Ernest Hemingway. The McDougall archive has a folder devoted to contemporary reviews. In the *Sunderland Echo*, the reviewer writes how McDougall subverts the normal expectations of a war novel: “The reader goes to war with Evelyn Waugh only – suddenly, shockingly – to find himself in Hemingway country, and eventually on unrecognizable literary ground” (K.L.). The reviewer accurately points to how McDougall, at every opportunity, questions and undermines the conventions and clichés of the war novel. This is particularly evident in his characterization of Brigadier Ian Kildare whose name even evokes Waugh and his ilk. The reviewer writes, “There was never a more Waugh-like figure than Brigadier Ian Kildare... Yet, it is Kildare who, by ordering the men of one of his units to execute two Italian deserters ends the Waugh like phase and begins the moral

disintegration of two of the main characters, Lt. John Adam and Padre Philip Doorn” (K.L.).

Contemporary reviewers were not the only ones to notice the stylistic and thematic affinity between McDougall and Hemingway. *Execution*'s first reader, Hugh MacLennan, also remarked upon their similarities but noted subtle but important differences between the writers. He wrote that *Execution* differed from Hemingway in that it was a quintessential Second World War novel: “The Somme, Verdun, and Passchendaele were so utterly monstrous that only blind rage emerged in the writers who handled them truly. Hemingway saw war only as a theatrical series of set pieces, and used it as a vehicle for his descriptive powers.” On the other hand, McDougall was, according to MacLennan, able to “penetrate all the way down to the sources of Original Sin in every human being.” MacLennan contrasts the way in which McDougall is able to keep his stylistic prowess from dominating the novel: “Hemingway’s style sticks out all over the place. Yours is something one is entirely unconscious of. Yet description after description, phrase after phrase, stick like glue” (MacLennan). While First World War writing meant the unabashed anger of Charles Yale Harrison and Ernest Hemingway, the literature of the Second World War allowed for the potential redemption of the “little man.” The style had to change accordingly.

Saul Bellow wrote to McDougall in 1974 professing to have read the book in one sitting because *Execution* possessed “something essential under the surface, something of real power, a terrible question: How much execution puts out our human light? What can we endure?” (Bellow). In 1953, at the beginning of the journal, after he resolves not to dwell on the metaphysics of despair, McDougall wonders, “would every novel require the

same time and consideration...? A sobering thought” (23/04/53). A laudatory review of *Execution* in the *Sunderland Echo* ends, “we can only hope to see more of his work soon” (K.L.). Perhaps McDougall only ever had one story to tell. Or maybe, he could no longer justify his belief in redemption and salvation through sacrifice. MacLennan wrote to McDougall, “I marvel that you live as efficiently and calmly as you do with those not gone where you have been” (MacLennan).

Despite achieving the commercial and artistic success he sought, McDougall would not pick up the pen again. Perhaps, as MacLennan feared, he tired of trying to explain war to those who could not know. Vera Brittain, author of the famous autobiography *Testament of Youth* (1933), which chronicled her own experience in the First World War, wrote to McDougall that “the Second World War will go down to history as the last example of this comradeship and this heightened sense of living, and your book will have an enhanced value as one of the few war books that really convey it” (Brittain). It is hard to believe that McDougall intended *Execution* to be a chronicle of the excitement of war. All that remains of McDougall is *Execution* and some lesser short stories written for pay. Perhaps it is fortunate to have anything at all. McDougall, unlike the witnesses described by Primo Levi, was not struck wordless. Sadly, though, the process of writing war meant that saying anything took all of him.

CHAPTER FOUR

From Memory to History: Timothy Findley's *The Wars*

In *Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory, and the Conquest of Everest* (2011), Wade Davis explores the ways in which the First World War affected climbers George Mallory and Andrew Irvine in their attempt to scale Mount Everest. On June 8th 1924, on their third expedition to the summit, they crossed the northeast ridge of Everest before disappearing into the mist. Of the 26 men who went on these three expeditions, the vast majority of them had served on the Western Front of the Great War, and this experience would inform their postwar quest for glory at Everest. Although the genesis of the Everest expeditions may have been nineteenth-century imperial ambitions, the context essential to understanding these men takes one far from the Himalayas to the trenches of France where Mallory and an entire generation saw their worldview obliterated. Perhaps the most vivid image of the impact the Great War had on these expeditions is Jack Hazard, who climbed to the top of the North Col with open, bleeding wounds from the Somme, which soaked the tunic of his climbing gear.

The wars of the first half of the twentieth century have a similar effect on Canadian literature. They are a wound on the national literature, which stubbornly refuses to scab over no matter the shifts in demographics, policy, or culture. The First World War's status as Canada's defining moment seems indestructible. Canadians went up Vimy Ridge a colony, it has been said, and came down a nation. Yet, by the 1970s, there was a marked shift in how that war was represented.

Nearly ten million soldiers were killed in the First World War. Approximately sixty-five million participated. In 2002, there were over seven hundred veterans still alive. On May 5th 2011, Claude Choules, the war's last combat veteran, died at the age of one-hundred-and-ten years, sixty-three days. Florence Green, a former member of the Women's Royal Air Force, became the last veteran of the First World War to die at the age of one-hundred-and-ten years, three-hundred-and-fifty days. With these deaths, the war shifted from memory to history.

War novels have anticipated this critical transition for some time. The first war novel to consider this question in depth was Timothy Findley's *The Wars* and in so doing considered the ramifications of how a nation remembers and constructs war:

All of this happened a long time ago. But not so long ago that everyone who played a part in it is dead. Some can still be met in dark old rooms with nurses in attendance. They look at you and rearrange their thoughts... The occupants of memory have to be protected from strangers (6).

As the Korean War came to an uneasy close in 1953, Canada started a period of peace unknown in the twentieth century. Under Pearson and Trudeau, Canadian troops were deployed in various peacekeeping capacities abroad and were engaged domestically in Quebec during the October Crisis of 1970; for the most part, however, Canada managed to avoid large-scale international conflicts. As the decades wore on, fewer and fewer Canadian veterans wrote of their experiences abroad, and the reading public grew tired of these narratives.

There may be no accounting for the taste of the reading public. It is likely, though, that the publishing industry saturated the market with war novels written by veterans. To

appropriate the terminology of military psychology, the reading and critical public began to suffer from a kind of warlit fatigue and the Canadian imagination began to drift from wartime exploits to peacekeeping's more palatable forbearance. The favourable climate for war novels in the 1940s and 1950s meant that second-rate works like *Little Man* and *Remember Me* could not only be published but be successful. *Execution*, a sophisticated novel, has been unfairly lumped in with the innumerable war novels published during the war novel's bull market. During the 1960s and especially the 1970s, there was a drought in the publication of war novels. Although there were passing references to the wars in such novels as *The Studhorse Man* (1969) by Robert Kroetsch and *Fifth Business* (1970) by Robertson Davies, war was reduced to a minor theme in Canadian novels.

The drought ended with the publication of *The Wars*, Findley's third novel and the lone war novel published in Canada in the 1970s. War is a central theme in Findley's fiction. Lorraine York, in her account of his fiction, *Front Lines*, writes, "In a rather odd coincidence, Findley's novels move in a nearly perfect chronological order in a path which itself narrates the march of modern history towards an ever increasingly mechanized and brutal form of war" (xxiii). For York, Findley's novels and short stories are all about war: "War, not only as a literary device but in the guise of various texts, literary or non-literary, informs the novels and stories of Timothy Findley to such an extent that it becomes an integral part of their signifying systems, the very processes by which they create meaning" (xviii). Findley's second novel, *The Butterfly Plague* (1969), deals with fascism and violence. In the successor to *The Wars*, *Famous Last Words* (1981), a postmodern quasi-spy novel, as much John Buchan as it is John Berger, wherein Ezra Pound's Hugh Selwyn Mauberly is the protagonist, Findley writes, "A war is just a

place where we have been in exile from our better dreams” (176). War serves as not a spectre but “a compulsive testament to the infinite repetitions of war in our domestic, gender and class conflicts” (York back). This is not the type of repetition Kierkegaard describes, but compulsion. Whatever the novel, what Findley’s fictional narrators have in common is an abiding preoccupation with the past. Each one seeks truth but is ultimately stymied by ambiguity. For Webb, each of Findley’s novels “is a morally complex tale about the ways in which war destroys the fabric of domestic society and haunts succeeding generations” (197).

If there is one Canadian war novel that is the touchstone for Canadians, it is Findley’s devastating account of Robert Ross, a nineteen-year-old second lieutenant in the First World War, which won the Governor General’s Award for fiction. Considering it to be “the finest historical novel ever written by a Canadian” (xvi), Guy Vanderhaeghe compares *The Wars* to *All Quiet on the Western Front* because both novels “so efficiently compress and crystallize the horrors of combat in so few pages” but “unlike Remarque, Findley achieves this impressive economy by piecing together a collage of arresting images and brief, telling scenes that not only cohere in a compelling narrative but whose form mimics the fractured lives of soldiers and civilians shattered by war” (xii). Eric Thompson wrote, “since the publication of... *The Wars*, readers have begun to realize that the war novel is a significant genre in Canadian literature” (81). Not since Hugh MacLennan had an author so successfully brought war fiction into the literary mainstream. *The Wars* ushered the war novel back into a place of literary prominence, though the ambitions of these new novels would be different than those of the first-war book boom.

Too young to have served in either World War but old enough to comprehend their impact on the Canadian psyche, Findley dispensed with the reliance on personal war experience, so vital to Harrison and McDougall, and became the first serious novelist to treat the First World War retroactively. He draws from the Canadian tradition of representing war but breaks from it by focusing on a retrospective impressionistic interpretation of events rather than verisimilitude. *Generals Die in Bed*, *Turvey*, and *Execution* all depict events as they happen. If the focus of previous war novels was the accurate depiction of sacrifice, *The Wars* introduces historiography and historical context into the paradigm. The vagaries of memory and the fraught process of commemoration became the utmost concern to Canadian war novelists. *The Wars* signaled the moment that the Canadian war novel shifted from memory to history or, more accurately, memories to histories. More importantly, this shift also signaled a transition in the representation of wartime ethics. The onus was no longer on the ethically embattled soldier to transcend experience but on the survivor to do justice to the dead.

Findley's most notable innovation in the war novel genre is the insertion of the reader as active participant in the narrative. The plot of *The Wars* itself is not all that unconventional. There are vestiges of Remarque, Graves, and Sassoon in the story of Robert Ross, a sensitive and naïve loner from a prominent Ontario family, who is disabused of any notions he may have had about the glories of war by his horrific and traumatizing experience. He unnecessarily kills a German soldier and, like the soldiers of *Execution*, spirals downward into a crisis of self and ethical uncertainty. Findley based Robert loosely on his real-life godfather, "Uncle Tif." As a Lieutenant in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Thomas Irving Findley was a committed correspondent and wrote

many letters, which contained vivid accounts of trench warfare. Timothy Findley inherited these letters upon his godfather's death, and they would form the basis for some scenes in *The Wars*. He would later lament that his uncle "didn't die in the war, but because of it" (*Inside Memory* 6). Robert, like Tif, is unable to recover from what he is forced to do in a wartime context and strives to hold on to his humanity. He injures his knee and convalesces at a manor home called Stourbridge (a likely stand-in for Craiglockhart Hospital, where Wilfrid Owen met Siegfried Sassoon). There, he has an affair with the mercurial Barbara D'Orsey before returning to the trenches. After suffering a brutal sexual assault at the hands of his fellow soldiers, he rebels against the strictures of the war by freeing a trainload of horses, ending up trapped with them in a barn that is burned to the ground. Though he survives, he is burned badly and in terrible pain. Despite this pain, he clings to life. He dies in 1922.

Although the plot may be conventional, the way it unfolds is not. The novel unfolds like a mystery. Robert's final act is hinted at again and again until its true horrific nature is finally revealed. The novel's implied author is an historian or archivist digging into Robert's life and death. The researcher is never able to arrive at a true account of Robert's time in the First World War: "It could not be told" (5). The story is obscured and veiled by the unreliable nature of historical research: "There is no good picture of [the Western Front] except the one you make in your mind" (69). The narrative resists certainty: "The dates are obscure here" (92) and "Here is where the mythology is muddled" (189). The researcher is not a named character, he or she is figured by the second person pronoun, "you": "As the past moves under your fingerprints, part of it crumbles. Other parts, you know you'll never find. This is what you have" (7). This

structure, which implicates the reader in the account, is vital to understanding the ethics of the novel.

It would be wrong to underestimate the impact of the war in Vietnam on the production of the Canadian war novel. This context had an impact on Findley as he wrote *The Wars* and, despite Canada's official policy of non-involvement, American incursions into Vietnam had a profound effect on Canadian culture and their perception of war. David Bergen's 2005 war novel *The Time in Between* explores the vestiges of that war in a Canadian context. The finest book, however, on the Canadian connection to Vietnam is Douglas Ross's 1984 account *In the Interest of Peace: Canada and Vietnam 1954-1973*. Canada's involvement in Vietnam began in 1954 when Louis St. Laurent agreed to send a team of diplomats to Vietnam to monitor the truce in Indochina. Canada's diplomatic intervention in Vietnam continued into the 1960s when senior diplomat Blair Seaborn served as intermediary with the leaders of North Vietnam (Novak 133). Ottawa's official position vis à vis the United States was as a sympathetic ally; by 1964, though, Pearson had serious misgivings about the conflict and let them be known to American President Lyndon Johnson: "any drastic escalation would give great problems both in Canada and internationally... [it] would be one thing to attack a bridge or an oil tank, but quite another to shower bombs on a village full of women and children" (English 358-359). When Pearson accepted the World Peace Prize in April 1965, he framed his speech as a challenge to the framers of American foreign policy in the hope that they would scale back their bombing of North Vietnam. He failed.

The war in Vietnam mobilized Canadians "like no event since the Spanish Civil War" (Novak 136). It was the first war to be widely televised and its disturbing images

quickly turned Canadians against the war. Johnson believed television to be a crucial reason why America was unsuccessful in Vietnam. In the glow of the nightly news, public support waned. Johnson said,

As I sat in my office last evening, waiting to speak, I thought of the many times each week when television brings the war into the American home. No one can say exactly what effect those vivid scenes have on American opinion. Historians must only guess at the effect that television would have had during earlier conflicts on the future of this Nation: during the Korean war, for example, at that time when our forces were pushed back there to Pusan; or World War II, the Battle of the Bulge, or when our men were slugging it out in Europe or when most of our Air Force was shot down that day in June 1942 off Australia. (Mandelbaum 157)

Johnson's implication is obvious: if any war had been televised, the United States would have had difficulty convincing the public it was worth fighting. Protests broke out on university campuses and beyond. A 1967 poll showed only 16 percent of Canadians supported the continuation of the war (Canadian Institute of Public Opinion). The Canadian government yielded to public opinion and distanced itself from the war and the United States by offering sanctuary to a great number of American deserters and draft dodgers. The total number of American immigrants to Canada between 1965 and 1974 was just under 175,000, while the number of draft dodgers is estimated to be between 50,000 and 125,000 (*America: Love it or Leave*). All this unrest and tumult hung over Findley as he composed his war novel about a distinctly different war. Donna Pennee attributes some of the initial success of *The Wars* to how it represents Canada at this time:

This anti-war novel was embraced in another form of specifically Canadian identification, namely, the I-am-not-American kind, which in the 1970s was particularly pronounced: this was a decade marked most obviously by the aftermath of the unpopularity of the Vietnam War and by economic nationalist laments for a colony which, after World War II, had imagined itself a nation only to discover itself a colony of a new empire, the U.S.A. (91)

That he chose the First World War as his subject is significant in a number of ways.

Informed partly by the political context in which he was writing, Findley conceived of war in a radically different way than had his predecessors. He was the first to point to violence as an intrinsic part of the human condition, placing the First World War on a continuum of wars that stretch back hundreds of years: “Because of its flatness this alleyway has been the scene of battles since the time of Caesar. All the great armies of modern history have passed this way and through this mud” (69). For previous novelists, war was the result of a dulling of the human spirit resulting from tragic circumstance. Connor put the blame for war at the feet of German aggression, Harrison blamed the dialectic, and McDougall pointed to moral weakness. Findley, on the other hand, takes a distinctly Freudian point of view and blames war’s persistence on a violent human nature. One character in *The Wars* refuses to categorize the war dead as “deaths” but rather “murders.” In this regard, *The Wars* is a singularly existential novel because all equivocation, be it national or systemic, is dispensed with. Only the individual, and his or her attempts to make meaning, remain.

Findley is able to differentiate his novel from previous contributions to the genre by introducing the academic concept of historiography while still remaining wary of its

pitfalls. He is able to incorporate history into a war narrative by employing a distinctly postmodern mode – historiographic metafiction. The supposedly natural Canadian suspicion of Grand Narratives and reliance on irony for expression creates and sustains the continued relevance of historiographic metafiction in Canadian letters. Novak considers *The Wars* to be a work of “considerable irony” (139). Hutcheon defines historiographic metafiction as “those novels that, by definition, are self referential or autorepresentative – suggest that the mimetic connection between art and life (by which we still seem to want to define the novel genre) has changed” (62). Therefore, historiographic metafiction is literary texts that are aware and self-reflexive of their constructions of the past, constantly questioning how their own biases or prejudices have influenced their own version of the truth. Through constant negotiation with the process of writing history, these metafiction offer a unique avenue through which the reader can engage with and speak constructively about the past; they acknowledge the writing of history, fiction or otherwise, as an inherently flawed endeavour. Historiographic metafiction can rescue literature from the natural impulse to write *history* and not *histories*. Michael Ondaatje gestures to this tension in the epigraph of *In the Skin of a Lion* (1987), beginning with a quotation from John Berger, “Never again will a story be told as if it were the only one.” This tension, codified by Hutcheon in the 1980s, was anticipated by Findley in the 1970s.

Continuing Roland Barthes’s work in *The Death of the Author*, Hutcheon argues that historiographic metafiction tend to include a representation of the producer at work; George Bowering writes in *Burning Water*, “If you are to identify with anyone it is the author who may put his cards on the table and ask for your help in finishing the story”

(30). Hutcheon makes the impossibility of writing only one history abundantly clear: “to write history (or historical fiction) is (equally) to narrate, to re-present by means of selection and interpretation. History (like realist fiction) is *made* by its writer” (66). Findley fictionalizes this impulse in *The Wars*, and Dennis Duffy notes that the archivist’s presence in the novel gestures toward the notion that stories “do not tell themselves. They do not come to us with beginnings, middles, and ends waiting to be bevelled neatly against each other. They come from scraps and tags, and we order them according to our notions of meaning rather than out of a certainty that it had to have been this way” (190).

Much has been made of Canada’s fraught relationship with history and other metanarratives, and at least a cursory understanding of this dynamic is crucial to comprehending Findley’s representation of wartime ethics. Central to that ethic is skepticism toward historical truth. As Webb notes, “For Connor and Montgomery, moral truth lay in the division of good and evil – with little doubt that Canada was on the side of good... Anti-war novelists, Harrison in particular, were obsessed with documenting war ‘as it really happened’” (200). The novel’s uneasiness with certainty and veracity is embodied in the novel by repeated allusions to the German-Prussian military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz and his book *On War*. *The Wars* even includes an epigraph from the tactician’s text: “In such dangerous things as war the errors which proceed from a spirit of benevolence are the worst” (2). For Clausewitz, war is a work of art. Findley quotes Von Clausewitz describing war as a “minuet.” After heavy bombardment, one soldier exclaims, “some minuet” (106). In actual fact, Clausewitz never refers to war as a “minuet.” Findley reveals throughout the text that even he is not to be trusted. Levitt,

Clausewitz's staunchest adherent in the novel, goes insane. Enlightenment ideals of reason and beauty are untenable in the context of the First World War.

Findley makes it clear that he and the narrator are well versed in an international tradition of writing war. The First World War was a war of unprecedented literary production. This is certainly one of the reasons Findley chose to set his novel during this war. Thompson writes that *The Wars* is "firmly in the 'tradition' of the genre inaugurated by Acland and Harrison and developed by Child" (92). Margaret Atwood, however, does not believe *The Wars* should be compared to the literary solar system created by Sassoon and Graves, but rather to "Colin McDougall's fine war novel, *Execution*" (294). Although the moral cosmology of *The Wars* is as complex as McDougall's only novel, Findley still chooses to allude to the stalwarts of the tradition: Graves, Owen, Sassoon, Conrad, and Joyce. D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf even make appearances in the novel as guests at the d'Orsey home. Like Woolf, Findley uses parenthesis to great effect:

(When men and women of Juliet D'Orsey's vintage refer to the 'First of July' they inevitably mean the first of July, 1916. It was on that date the Somme offensive was begun. In the hours between 7:30am and 7:30pm. 21,000 British soldiers were killed – 35,000 were wounded and 600 taken prisoner by the Germans. This is perhaps a place to point out that Lord Clive Stourbridge, Juliet and Barabara eldest brother, was one of the Cambridge poets whose best-known work – like that of Sassoon and Rupert Brooke – had its roots in the war. Other poets who were on the First of July, besides Stourbridge and Sassoon, were Robert Graves and Wilfred Owen. Both Sassoon and Graves have written accounts of the battle.)

(100-01)

Here, Findley aligns *The Wars* with the canon of war writing while subverting the illusion of verisimilitude by inserting a fictional poet in the form Lord Clive Stourbridge.

Throughout the novel, Findley continues to pursue a policy of what one might describe as “near-accuracy.” The novel rests just on the precipice of historical veracity: “a whole age lies in fragments” (7). Many of the events and details in the novel are verifiable. The British did commission Canadian (and American) horses for the war effort. Although the *S.S. Massanabie* may be fictional, the brutal transatlantic trip endured by the soldiers is akin to many other trips recounted in memoirs and histories. The descriptions of gas attacks, flamethrowers, and trench life in general are well researched. For Webb, this commitment to accuracy allows *The Wars*, “for all its ambiguities and wordplay, to appear credible as an authentic piece of historical fiction – which in many ways it is” (203). Whenever he begins to veer toward straightforward historical documentation, however, Findley is quick to subvert it. This is particularly true of how Findley employs photographs in the novel. An early scene signals the instability of artifact, even one as seemingly stable as the photograph. The researcher with whom the reader learns of Robert Ross’s war experience searches for a photograph of Robert: “Then you see him: Robert Ross. Standing on the sidelines with pocketed hands – feet apart and narrowed eyes. His hair falls sideways across his forehead. He wears a checkered cap and dark blue suit. He watches with a dubious expression; half admiring – half reluctant to admire” (9). The reader, trained by years of reading history, could be forgiven for taking this account at face value. He or she might not inquire as to how the researcher is able to distinguish between a dark blue suit and a black suit in a black and

white photograph: “1915. The year itself looks sepia and soiled – muddied like its pictures” (7). History and historical production are equated.

York points to Findley’s quasi-biography, *Inside Memory: Pages from a Writer’s Workbook* (1990), as a way to understand Findley’s use of photographs in his novels. She brings the kind of poststructuralist and, specifically, post-modernist thought that is by no means scarce vis à vis his novels to bear on his autobiography, referring to it as “photographic life writing” (644). In *Inside Memory*, Findley uses photography in much the same way he does in his fiction, a means of “simplifying analogy, as though the acts of rummaging through memory and flipping through a photograph album were readily synonymous” (647). He writes of his model for the character of Juliet D’Orsey, “I have no photographs of this in the concrete sense but the pictures in my mind are much more like photographs than remembered images from life” (137). Remembering his own brother Michael, he notes, “The child I remember being myself is as much a remembrance of him as it is of me . . . So, to be a child in memory means that I conjure Michael, not the child in photographs who bears my name” (5). This seemingly unmediated relationship between signifier and signified is what Hutcheon refers to in *The Politics of Postmodernism* as “the major photographic code, the one that pretends to look uncoded” (45).

The suspicion of everyday assumptions about representation, subjectivity and memory that runs, like a subtle undercurrent, through Findley’s *Inside Memory* is omnipresent in *The Wars*. Shortly after Robert joins the army, he sends his father a photograph: “This [photograph] will show you that my draft makes a brawling, husky lot of men . . . he didn’t feel like sending love to anyone. It seemed unmanly” (51). This

letter, written with “unnerving formality,” is the height of dramatic irony. The reader, at this point, is well aware that Robert is hardly the bastion of nineteenth-century stoic masculinity. Robert’s mother reminds him, “You bruise so easily... how alarmed we were every time you fell” (22). He is an intensely sensitive person. His allegiance with the war’s supposed test of manhood, as if this were a Connor novel, rings hollow. Ross is compared to recognizably chivalrous figures like T.E. Lawrence, Robert Scott, and George Mallory though only because of the indignity of their deaths: “many have died like Robert Ross, obscured by violence. Lawrence was hurled against a wall – Scott entombed in ice and wind – Mallory blasted on the face of Everest. Lost” (7).

Here and throughout the novel, Findley points to the way in which even seemingly the most stable historical documents are unreliable and can be misinterpreted or used to obscure. In the epilogue to the novel, the researcher thinks: “Then you remember something written long after Robert Ross was dead. It was written during another war – in 1943 – by the Irish essayist and critic Nicholas Fagan. This is what he wrote: *‘the space between the perceiver and perceived can... be closed with a shout of recognition. One form of a shout is a shot. Nothing so completely verifies our perception of a thing as our killing of it.’* THE ARCHIVIST CLOSES HER BOOK” (197-198). Fagan, the purported essayist, does not exist. The reader is reminded to “*pay attention*” (7).

The structure of *The Wars* is not meant only to foreground incredulity toward historical certainty. Findley uses the First World War as a way to encode the shift from modernism to postmodernism. The theories and philosophies of modernism became untenable in the new environment of emerging technologies just as horses become

untenable in the age of mechanized warfare. In *The Wars*' grandest understatement, Levitt says, "the cavalry is sort of on the outs" (88). The modernist retreat into a mythic world of order and harmony can no longer be reconciled with reality.

In the introduction to *From There to Here*, Frank Davey describes Canadian modernism as "elitist, formalistic, anti-democratic, and anti-terrestrial" (19). He complains that the modernist poets removed themselves from the processual and material world in favour of a world populated with Platonic ideals and pure essence. Taking their lead from T.S. Eliot, these poets sought to impose a credible order on reality. War novelists participated in this strategy as well. Harrison found his credible order in Marxism, Klein in Judaism, Birney in satire, and McDougall in Kierkegaard. Findley rejects the notion that experience is reducible to an ideological systems theory. As Webb writes, "*The Wars* revises the tradition of First World War fiction by refusing to uphold ideals of patriotism, showing at the same time that anti-war writers' desire to depict the war truthfully and realistically is fraught with complications that are inherent in the contingent process of interpreting memory and history through narrative" (206). The postmodern heirs of modernist order sought to write in anarchic cooperation within a chaotic, referenceless world. Davey characterizes that shift as one of perspective, from victim to participant. To a modernist, lack of control over one's environment renders one a victim. To a postmodernist, like Findley and perhaps even Robert Ross, it renders one a participant. It is no coincidence that Robert's long-delayed pistol is compared to Joyce's most famous inanimate object: "[The Pistol's] fate, like the fate of Leopold Bloom's bar of soap, became a minor Odyssey" (32).

It is easy to become stuck on the postmodern elements of *The Wars*. While the structure is certainly metafictional, Findley's characterization of the soldiers remains existential. One soldier laments, "I doubt we will ever be forgiven. All I hope is – they'll remember we were human beings" (162). The narrator echoes Jean Paul Sartre, "People can only be found in what they do" (7). In his final desperate act, Robert seeks to fulfill a Kierkegaardian principle of undoing prior bad acts. His final resting place gestures toward his elemental, universal quality, "EARTH AND AIR AND FIRE AND WATER" (196). Critics have read Robert's descent into elemental nature as ultimately an ascent into a greater humanity. Robert's fall also echoes Charles Sorley's description of a soldier's life and death: "First man; then, when hit, animal, writhing and thrashing in articulate agony or making horrible snoring noises; then a 'thing'" (qtd. in Fussell 126). The novel, however, rejects pessimism and cynicism and points to the human capacity to choose life, even in the face of tremendous suffering, when a horrifically burned Robert rejects his nurse's offer to euthanize him and end his suffering, he declares "not yet" (195). For Novak, Robert is nothing less than a hero: "[his] unique heroism reveals itself in two singular acts of defiance: his desertion with the convoy of horses and his tearing off of his lieutenant's stripes. While Robert's heroism differs greatly from that of a Barry Dunbar or a John Adam, it is heroism, nonetheless" (132).

Novak's view reflects that of Robert's nurse, Marian Turner, who considers Robert to be "*un homme unique*": "My opinion was – he was a hero. Not your everyday Sergeant York or Billy Bishop, Mind You! (LAUGHTER) But a hero nonetheless. You see, he did the thing that no one else would even dare to think of doing. And that to me's the definition of a hero" (12). This is certainly a radical view of wartime ethics. Even

Adam or Bazin, who acknowledge that war is tantamount to execution, would likely have had a difficult time forgiving Robert for what he did. For Turner, “It was the war that was crazy I guess. Not Robert Ross or what he did” (12). Robert’s actions, heroic or not, certainly constitute a rebellion. His last name, Ross, recalls the famously faulty rifles assigned to Canadian soldiers in the First World War by Sir Sam Hughes, who makes an appearance in the novel, photographed giving a speech on Yonge Street. This scene is immediately followed by a description of Robert on horseback leaping “through memory and sound” (9). For Webb, Robert’s heroism is much more ambivalent: “Robert commits acts that are part heroism, part desperation... His compulsion to protect innocent horses drives him to reject his military duty; he shoots Captain Leather when the latter becomes deranged... From a military standpoint, Robert’s act is unethical if not mutinous” (205). Rodwell’s belief that “Any man whose love of horses is stronger than his fear of being an absurdity is all right with me” becomes an ominous bit of foreshadowing by the novel’s end (88). There are consistent allusions to St. Eloi, who is best known as the patron saint of horses. The Battle of the St. Eloi was the first major engagement for the 2nd Canadian Division, recently arrived from England, resulting in two weeks of confused, mud-caked fighting. Robert’s occupation with horses aligns Findley’s work with *Execution*. By the end of *Execution*, Krasnick’s unwillingness to shoot at cavalry comes to represent a universal recognition of the plight of humanity. In the novel’s final pages, he has been killed, and his former machine gun runner, Ewart, asks Adam if he remembers how Krasnick refused to shoot horses; Adam responds, “Of course, none of us would” (271).

Robert is the novel’s protagonist, and so sympathy naturally rests with him, yet his actions challenge “the reader’s sensibilities, as the urge to applaud his rebellion

conflicts with the violence he commits... It epitomizes both the insanity and absurdity of war, where any attempt to uphold morality is problematized by the consequences of decisive action” (Webb *Occupants of Memory* 205). The ambivalence about Robert’s heroism is crucial to the novel’s ambitions. The ability to hold two diametrically opposed opinions in one’s head at the same time, whether it is the narrator’s, reader’s, or one of the characters’, is represented and prized in the novel. Anne Geddes Bailey recognizes the importance of this duality:

Whether Robert Ross is or is not a hero, is or is not a symbol of compassionate humanity, is never finally decided in the novel as a whole. Some of the narrators and some readers have made their decision but the novel does not give one interpretation authority over the other. Instead, *The Wars* only allows competing narratives the power to challenge and question the political, ideological, and aesthetic assumptions inherent within various interpretations of Robert Ross’s life. Each narrative is able to reveal partial truths about Robert but each narrative is also governed by a set of conventions which threaten to silence Robert completely. (100)

This duality is central to the representation of memory in the novel. When further reminiscing about her wartime experience, Turner is fixed on a matter of pronunciation:

Language is a strange thing, isn’t it? *Bois de Madeleine... Magdalene Wood*. Take your pick. Now, *I* say Mag-daleen Wood if I’m speaking what you might call Canadian; you know, North American. But the English say it’s *Maudlin* Wood. Maudlin-Mag-dalene-Madeleine. They’re all kind of nice – but I like *Madeleine*.

That is where I say I was, if people ask. I served at Bois de Madeleine from the spring of 1916 to the fall of 1917. (193)

This seemingly non-sequitur tangent is an allusion to a classic of modern literature. Given the novel's obsession with memory, the allusion to Marcel Proust's *Swann's Way* (1913), the first volume of *In Search of Lost Time*, is not difficult to discern. The section evokes Swann's consumption of a Madeleine cake, which allows him to experience the past and the present simultaneously: "And as soon as I had recognized the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me...the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea" (59). Swann is able to hold the past and the present in his head at the same time, and so does *The Wars*.

The novel begins at the end, with Robert, a horse, and a dog stopped just down the road from Magdalene (or perhaps *Madeleine*) Wood. The section is returned to verbatim in the novel's final section. In the meantime, the narrative jumps from the presumptive present day to the war and back again. This structural preoccupation with memory and how the past informs the present indicates that the ethical quandary at the centre of the novel is not whether Robert's final acts are heroic. The ethical stakes of the novel rest on how the war's survivors and those born after the events in question took place remember and represent them. The question posed by *The Wars* is what happens to memory when it is subsumed by history. To what extent does history replace collective memory? Robert is one of the people, described by Primo Levi, who touched bottom and never returned. What is the responsibility of the nation to make meaning out of that experience? Despite its skepticism toward nationalism and myth, *The Wars* is about the difficult process of

remembering and commemorating the war dead. Like *The Second Scroll*, *The Wars* becomes a parable for Canadians not only about why we remember the fallen but how.

In jumping between time periods, Findley is able to comment on the intersection of the war and the domestic sphere. As York points out, “Specific incidents in the domestic lives of the Ross family gain... a decidedly war-like cast; in turn, features of Robert’s life in the trenches begin to assume a peculiarly domestic aura” (*Front Lines* 32). The early domestic sections are rife with military similes while the later war sections tend to employ domestic language. Before even enlisting in the army, Robert wears a trench coat. The dugout Robert inhabits during the war becomes a surrogate space of domesticity. Each inhabitant enjoys a particularly homey hobby: Levitt reads, Rodwell draws animals, Devlin collects stained glass, and Bonny loves to eat. Significantly, Levitt’s choice of reading material, Clausewitz’s *On War*, disturbs the other dug-out members because it is a violation of the established war/domestic divide.

Robert’s interactions with his mother employ military language. Mrs. Ross describes Robert’s oft-bruised body as looking “[j]ust like a savage painted for the wars” (22). In Findley’s screenplay for *The Wars*, this scene is replaced with the line, “It’s a mother’s prerogative to visit the wounded” (qtd. in York 32). When Mrs. Ross is unable to stop Robert from enlisting, her withering comments, “Well – you can go to hell. I’m not responsible. I’m just another stranger” (23), mirror Captain Leather’s own equivocation of responsibility later in the novel, the difference being that Captain Leather actually means what he says:

Mrs. Ross is continually moving from room to room, sometimes retreating, sometimes advancing... in a pattern that is suggestive of a type of domestic trench

warfare... The bedroom becomes a veritable reserve trench, to which she can repair after the horrors of domestic combat. This pattern – retreat from pain, advance in hopes of domestic conciliation – leaves her fighting a stultifying war of attrition on the home front. (*Front Lines* 33)

Findley does not draw these parallels merely to suggest that the domestic sphere can be war-like. The novel is structured so that the first half of the novel takes place in the domestic realm; these parallels become revelatory only in retrospect. Findley again points to the importance of looking back to comprehend how the past impinges on the present. When Robert arrives in Europe to begin fighting, the narrator warns, “There are no good similes” (69). York explains, “The type of simile we have learned to expect in the domestic scenes, whereby the ordinary is rendered fantastic, can no longer work in the world of the wars. The utterly fantastic and horrifying must only be softened, domesticated” (*Front Lines* 34).

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ross fights a war on the home front. In the novel’s third section, Findley rarely interrupts his account of Robert’s experience in the trenches. In the midst of his most intense battle, however, he affords the reader a look into Mrs. Ross’s wartime activities. She is figured as a soldier as well who battles the most basic elements. She “began to seek out storms” and walks in “rain or wind or snow” (135); she “puts on the gardener’s rubber boots and has to contend with mud” (136); when the parliament buildings, a symbol of domestic rule if there ever was one, burn to the ground she believes that “her country was being destroyed by fire” (136). Robert’s epitaph “EARTH AND AIR AND FIRE AND WATER” could just as easily apply to her.

The Wars shifts the lens of war from the international sphere to the domestic. This

is not only to show how war impinges on family life but also to serve as a wider commentary on the impact of the First World War in Canada. Pennee writes that *The Wars* “encodes the story of Canada’s initiation into the rights of nationhood and state power through the rites of military, technological, and familial participation in the Great War” (89). This reading, however, is insufficient. *The Wars* transcends national allegory, serving as a rebuke of the romance tradition: “Findley holds up the myths of the Great War to careful scrutiny, only to find them wanting. In this parody of romance, the myths appear grotesquely misplaced, while the war experience itself remains undeniably devastating” (Novak 139). Findley also apes the conventions of Arthurian legend:

The smell was unnerving — as if some presence were lurking in the fog like a dragon in a story. Poole was quite correct; the ground was saturated with gas. Chlorine and phosgene were currently both in use. Mustard gas was still to come. (72)

In his article, “The Dragon in the Fog: ‘Displaced Mythology’ in *The Wars*,” Bruce Pirie notes, “By mentioning ‘a dragon in a story,’ . . . the narrator teases us with a glimpse of another, more truly seductive influence. Behind the elaborate realism of *The Wars* hides the beguiling shape of myth and legend — the dragon that lurks in the fog” (70).

Romance, however, had hardly been relevant as a genre in war writing since its decimation at the hands of Harrison and the other anti-war realists in the 1930s. It is unlikely that Findley intended *The Wars* to satirize a long-dead tradition. The novel appropriates myth and romance for more than just parody. It is a larger nationalist critique that implicates the reader in a process of purveying comforting national myths. The First World War was not where Canada won glory and came into its own; it is where

a generation of young people lost their lives. *The Wars* prods the reader not to seek meaning where there is none. The novel ends on a note of recognition of intrinsic humanity. The researcher, after recalling the fictional Nicholas Fagan's idea about closing the gap between perceiver and perceived, looks at a photo of Robert and his sisters, Rowena and Meg: "'Look! You can see our breath!' And you can" (198).

Findley often alludes to civil war in the novel. To reinforce his commentary on the ubiquity of war in all facets of life, especially the domestic, Findley's adopts the tropes of civil war literature. *The Wars*, then, becomes a comment not only on a particular war but also on all wars. After all, the novel is not called *The War*. Civil wars are important to the novel because of the previously discussed "intermingling of the domestic and the military" (York 41). This intermingling recalls the works of Duncan and Montgomery that critiqued the cultures of militarization integral to Canadian life. The American Civil War is invoked through intertextual allusion and gives the novel its title. Mr. Ross reads *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* to Mrs. Ross on the train when she waves goodbye to Robert: "'Come on back to the raf, Huck honey' And this is what they called *the wars*" (65). Despite the fact that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* takes place pre-Civil War, it is often characterized as a product of that particular conflict. Furthermore, it is not difficult to see the parallels between Robert and Huck. Both cast off in search of adventure and fresh experience when domestic life becomes too stifling: "Distance was safety. Space was asylum" (31).

Another domestic strife is represented in the relationship between white Canadians and Native Canadians. Robert longs to emulate his idol, the aboriginal long distance runner Tom Longboat. Longboat is a real-life historical figure who won the title

of Professional Champion of the World at Madison Square Garden in 1909. He also fought in the First World War where he was mistakenly declared dead. Although Findley expressed a desire to have Robert and Longboat cross paths in Europe, he was unable to do so. The privileged world from which the Rosses come cannot be reconciled with Longboat's world. Therefore, Robert collapses when he attempts to copy Longboat and run a marathon in his own neighbourhood. His failure hints at the irreconcilable experiential distance between Longboat and Robert. Longboat represents "the cultural past and a painful domestic war which is not easily assuaged, even today" (York 43). The distance is reinforced further when Robert sees a "band of Indians" through a train window in a scene reminiscent of his mother's tepid farewell:

Passing through Regina, Robert saw a band of Indians – twelve or fourteen of them – standing behind the railroad tracks. They all wore blankets held against the winter wind. This was very early in the morning. All the soldiers pressed against the windows looking out. One of the Indians sat on a horse... They stood and stared at all the faces – ghosts through the frosted glass. (41)

Here, the domestic cultural schism is even more pronounced. Two groups of people separated by glass, one group on horseback, the other on steam engine. The aboriginal figures are the vestiges of Robert's pastoral fantasy destroyed by war.

An essential element of Romance is high adventure. *The Wars* features many characters, usually children, who see war as a chance at glory. The letters Robert's younger brother Stuart receives from him thrill him because they serve as a kind of cultural currency:

Master Stuart made his letters into paper darts and launched page by page from

the roof of the house – watching them descend and fade into the green ravine below while he muttered rat-a-tat-tat! Boom! Karoom! Some he saved to trade at school for other artifacts sent by other brothers like his own – but only the letters mailed from France were worthy of this exchange. They had to have the smell of fire. (65)

The allure of the “smell of fire” is a phrase that seems to be borrowed from a romance novel. Connor’s *The Sky Pilot in No Man’s Land* is full of men tested by fire. The only characters who hold this view in the novel tend to be children, and in doing so, “Findley shows the distance in time through which this high rhetoric has passed and it has become corrupt. The irony is clear” (Novak 139). The target of the satire, though, is not only romance and myth but how Canada has traditionally commemorated its war dead. It is not a coincidence that Findley eschews the typical scenes of Canadian glory in the First World War. There is no Vimy, Amiens, or Arras. Harrison would have been proud.

Through a process of introspection and retrospection, Findley shifts the subject of the war novel from the individual soldier to the nation. Personal remembrance, like the kind found in McDougall’s diary, is replaced by collective memory – there are a multitude of remembrances in the novel, each one more flawed and subjective than the last. He does this through a strategy of near-accurate historical representation and the web of intertexts that has come to define the First World War. He completes the job Klein set out to do in *The Second Scroll*, where Klein laid out a blueprint for how to exist in a world defined by trauma and how to move forward in a world scarred by war. Findley is less concerned with moving forward as he is with looking back. He shows the previous ways in which Canada has tried to come to terms with the First World War to be lacking.

Canadians are not just satisfied to be able war-makers but must be morally right as well. Pennee writes, “‘war’ has also been a significant part of ‘the signifying system’ of ‘Canada’ at different historical moments. While each of Canada’s engagements in several wars has its own specificities, what matters... is the structural *repetition* of those moments as having the *function of defining and differentiating* a national identity through time” (92). Findley draws attention to the artificial and pragmatic ways in which Canada has conceived of war for its own purposes. These nationalistic strategies, which often rely on erasure and nostalgia, have been used to obscure suffering and obfuscate responsibility.

The most persistent of these nationalist myths has been the politically comforting idea of Canadian peacekeeping. Although Canadians are certainly proud of their performance in the First and Second World War, it is still the idea of peace that has the tightest grasp on the Canadian psyche. In 2002, three out of ten Canadians reported “peacekeeping” as the most positive contribution that Canada, as a country, makes to the world (Anker).

Peacekeeping remains important to Canadians despite the declining involvement of Canada in peacekeeping operations and the fact that it continues to engage in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and, now, Syria: “The contemporary role of Canada as ‘a peacekeeper’ on the international stage has been complicated by increasing participation in military actions that are still characterized more as active than as passive service; Canada as ‘peacekeeper,’ especially in the wake of 9/11, often seems to be more a matter of desired identity than of lived reality” (Milne). J. L. Granatstein and Norman Hillmer argue, “if nations must have images, it is certainly better for Canadians to think of themselves as

umpires, as morality incarnate, than as mass murderers or warmongers” (350). The Canadian cultural shift from noble warrior to stoic peacekeeper has had a profound effect on attempts to theorize Canadian war literature. For Canadians, peacekeeping has gained mythic status and seems firmly entrenched in the echelon of untouchable Canadian symbols.

The collective Canadian pride in peacekeeping no doubt stems from its involvement in the creation of the initial United Nations peacekeeping force. It was Canadian Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson who, during the Suez Crisis in 1956, first proposed the United Nations force from which peacekeeping evolved. The images of blue helmeted forces monitoring international hot spots and buffer zones populated military advertising and were even featured in a once ubiquitous “Canadian Heritage Moment.” The image most Canadians have of peacekeeping, however, is largely out of step with the shifting nature of the enterprise. A military report attributes the psychic disconnect to “an anachronistic understanding of peacekeeping [that] influences public opinion: UN missions involving blue-bereted troops monitoring buffer zones. The quandary is that the days when peacekeeping operations meant deploying static observers wearing blue berets along a cease-fire line have, for the most part, passed” (Anker). At the end of the twentieth century, Canadian forces transformed themselves from peacekeepers into warriors by necessity. A sequence of peacekeeping scandals and failures in Somalia, Rwanda, and Yugoslavia in the early nineties “cut Canadians close to the bone” (Richler “And Now We Are Warriors”). The disparity between the Canadian perception of peacekeeping and its reality is only exacerbated by the contradiction between the national pride Canadians hold for peacekeeping and its actual contribution.

Prior to his ill-fated re-entry into Canadian politics, Michael Ignatieff did not have the most flattering things to say about Canadian peacekeeping efforts. At a speech in Ireland, he criticized Canadians for trading on Canada's "entirely bogus reputation as peacekeepers" for 40 years (Patriquin). He continued to lambaste Canadians for continuing to take pride in peacekeeping; "It's disgusting in my own country, and I love my country, Canada, but they would rather bitch about their rich neighbour to the south than actually pay the note... To pay the bill to be an international citizen is not something that they want to do" (Patriquin). Ignatieff is not entirely wrong for criticizing Canada for trading on its "bogus" reputation as peacekeepers. Despite its initial role in the creation of the UN peacekeeping force, Canadian involvement with peacekeeping has dropped steadily over the decades, especially when it comes to army and police personnel. The fact that, as of 2009, Canada ranks 49th in peacekeeping among participating countries has not deterred its persistence as a national myth.

As Heike Harting and Smaro Kambourelli write, "This vision of Canada as an engineer and custodian of global civility reflects a politically comforting national imaginary domestically, but is nevertheless marred by its exclusionary and dichotomous rhetoric that pits disinterested justice against arbitrary violence and the absence of the rule of law" (660). Peacekeeping is analogous, then, to the teleological suspension of the ethical described by Kierkegaard. In the service of peace (the motto emblazoned on Ottawa's peacekeeping monument), Canada supposedly suspends certain aspects of the rule of law like national sovereignty in favour of "justice." A likening of peacekeeping to the teleological suspension of the ethical does not work precisely because it is nominally in the name of "justice." Kierkegaard's whole point about the suspension of the ethical is

that it is a suspension of *all* communicable intersubjective norms. To suspend the principle of sovereignty in favour of another principle (justice) does not fall into this category, precisely because justice is a communicable, intersubjective, ethical principle. This conflict between two principles, here sovereignty and justice, is actually much more Hegelian than Kierkegaardian (one thinks of Hegel's definition of tragedy as the conflict between two "goods" – in his paradigmatic example of the *Antigone*, between the principles of the state and the family). Kierkegaard's philosophy is largely a reaction to Hegel but perhaps it would be more precise to argue that the Canadian peacekeeping ethic "mirrors" the teleological suspension of the ethical as depicted in war novels only in a more radical, but more accurate, interpretation of the "mirror" metaphor: the mirror reflects, but inverts.

As Shereen Razack writes, peacekeeping can reinforce the versus-habit Fussell warned about: "An up-close look at peacekeeping reveals that we are drawn into the showdown between good and evil referred to in George W. Bush's speeches, or in peacekeeping and humanitarian encounters, because they offer us a sense of self and belonging" (Harting 659). By equating Canadian peacekeeping with Bush, a noted hawk, she speaks to the broader cultures of militarization that exist within Canadian society. These cultures often manifest themselves through discourses of security. Ignatieff lamented in 2005, "We used to be peacekeepers, we used to have the capabilities [but] we gave them away, because people wanted hospitals and schools and roads. And God bless them, but the costs are coming in" (Patriquin).

When Ignatieff became leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, however, his acceptance speech featured an anecdote detailing how he was saved by a Canadian

peacekeeper in the former Yugoslavia. He praised Canada for being “a light unto nations... in a world ravaged by hatred.” “The Canadian way,” he continued “[was] a way for the whole world” (Patriquin). Whatever intellectual misgivings Ignatieff may have had in regards to Canadian peacekeeping are outweighed by the necessity of preserving the symbolic logic of Canadian identity. Identity needs symbols as much as symbols need identity. While the peacekeeping monument explicitly claims to be “In the Service of Peace,” in reality, its symbolic power assures that it is, in fact, in the service of peace of mind.

In challenging Canadian assumptions about war, *The Wars* is the ideal war novel for the peacekeeping age. By relying on subjective retrospective analysis, Findley signaled a change in the war novel template that would be adhered to for years to come. The narrative of the soldier’s personal tragedy, which emerged out of Harrison’s anti-war model, is relegated to the background in favour of contemplative novels about how a nation can adequately commemorate its war dead and how its collective memory relies upon war to sustain unity. Findley’s representation of memory, personal and collective, is reminiscent of the work of French philosopher Maurice Halbwachs, who differentiated between two different types of memory: “autobiographical” and “historical.” Autobiographical memory is the memory of lived experience. One’s autobiographical memory sets one apart from the group. Historical memories, on the other hand, are false memories of an event that has only been experienced indirectly: “These events occupy a place in the memory of the nation, but I myself did not witness them. In recalling them, I must rely entirely upon the memory of others, a memory that comes, not as corroborator or completer of my own, but as the very source of what I wish to repeat” (Halbwachs 51).

Even in the age of peacekeeping, war continued to generate meaning for Canadians, “think of the anger and judgement at (Canadian) soldiers’ death by ‘friendly’ (U.S.) fire; think of the humour afforded political cartoonists by the dilapidated SeaKings; think of the left-liberal pride at Jean Chretien’s refusal to join the U.S. and Britain in the war against Iraq because it was not sanctioned by the UN” (Pennee 92). Or, as Thomas Hardy writes in *The Dynasts* (1904), “War makes rattling good history; but Peace is poor reading” (II.v). The questions posed by *The Wars*, of commemoration and collective memory, are picked up in the subsequent decades of war writing in such novels as *Broken Ground* and *The Stone Carvers*. The existential onus shifts from the individual soldier to how a nation makes meaning out of war.

CHAPTER FIVE

Heritage vs. History:

Monuments and Memory in Contemporary Canadian War Fiction

In 2007, at the ninetieth anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper stood at the massive war memorial constructed at Vimy and delivered a short speech. His words showed a keen awareness of the power of collective memory: “We Canadians here today are a long way from home. But there may be no place on earth that makes us feel more Canadian. Because we sense, all around us, the presence of our ancestors” (Harper). Harper’s speech employs the power of symbols to reinforce identity and the way in which ideology manifests itself in ritual. The speech calls for a remembrance of something the assembled crowd could not possibly be expected to remember, except as received fact: “If we close our eyes we can see them, dressed in their olive khaki uniforms, rifles slung over their shoulders, the distinct Canadian wide-brimmed helmet perched on their heads.” Harper is quick to include a subtle reminder of under whose flag our ancestors were fighting: “Overhead, the red ensign is fluttering in the breeze.” In addition to honouring the dead, Harper’s speech reminds those in attendance and back in Canada what Vimy means: “Every nation has a creation story. The First World War and the Battle of Vimy Ridge are central to the story of Canada... The Somme, Ypres, Passchendaele, Beaumont-Hamel: the names of all the great battles are well known to Canadians and Newfoundlanders. But we know the name Vimy best of all” (Harper). Harper’s speech does what all speeches of this kind strive to do, make the historical personal.

Recent years have seen a variety of attempts both to represent and to disrupt the complex rhetoric present in Harper's Vimy speech. Must everything be made personal? Is there not solipsism in that endeavour? In Catherine Bush's *The Rules of Engagement* (2000), for instance, the Canadian protagonist, Arcadia Hearne, studies war, investigating contemporary world conflicts from her London home. While contemplating a humanitarian trip to Somalia, Arcadia tries to understand a traumatic moment of violence from her past, when two men engaged in a pistol duel over her. This conflation of personal and global conflict is paradigmatic of so-called "humanitarian narratives," an emerging genre in Canadian and world literature. These narratives are "designed to produce affect, incite humanitarian action that... involves capitalist charity, and serve the interests of sovereign nation-states that undertake humanitarian missions" (Kambourelli). This phenomenon is also present in recent Canadian narratives of war, for Canadian war novels of the last decade engage with and comment upon the fraught process of turning the political into the personal.

In his article, "The Individual Is International: Discourses of the Personal in Catherine Bush's *The Rules of Engagement* and *Canada's International Policy Statement*," Benjamin Authers considers how the personal gives meaning to global political engagement. Arcadia believes that, by linking her experiences with violence to civil warfare, she can humanize global politics. In that vein, Canada's 2005 foreign policy statement, *Canada's International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World*, also places the onus on individual Canadians to justify government intervention internationally in the name of "the national desire to 'make a difference globally'" (3). Authers argues, however, that both texts, in their conflation of political

and personal, run the risk of “becoming acts of consumption, a means of saying something about ‘our’ sympathy and benevolence; they thus tend towards a solipsism that fails to understand dialogue as an essential part of engagement with another” (782).

Recent Canadian war fiction continues Findley’s work in *The Wars* by walking the same tightrope in its representation of the personal impulse to memorialize and canonize. At the same time, they resist Findley’s postmodern mode. *The Wars* did not, as many critics predicted, usher in an era of ironic detachment in war writing. Recent war novels return to a level of sincerity not seen since the 1920s. They cast their narrative gaze back to the First World War, hardly ever the Second World War, in order to understand not that conflict but how it has shaped who Canadians are now. They are reflections of Canadian anxieties about memory and memorialisation. As a result, contemporary responses to the First World War tend to focus less on battles and soldiers than war’s aftermath and those left to pick up the pieces.

Broken Promises: Veterans and the Nation in *Broken Ground*

In discussions of Canada's relationship to war, the figure of the veteran is particularly fraught. Veterans, including Canadian veterans, are essential to the preservation of historical and political continuity. John McCrae's First World War poem "In Flanders Fields," recited each Remembrance Day by schoolchildren, implores its readers to "[t]ake up our quarrel with the foe" and catch a metaphorical torch in order to honour those who fought to preserve Canada's values. In the wake of the 2014 shooting at Ottawa's National War Memorial that killed Cpl. Nathan Cirillo of the Argyll and Sunderland Highlanders, Harper invoked similar rhetoric in his official statement on the attack: "Cpl. Cirillo was killed today, murdered in cold blood, as he provided a ceremonial honour guard at Canada's National War Memorial, that sacred place that pays tribute to those who gave their lives so that we can live in a free, democratic and safe society" ("Stephen Harper's Speech"). The war veteran, when dead, is a useful rhetorical device, usually invoked to inspire gratitude and quell potential criticism. If military spending is questioned, a sitting government is not likely to resist questioning whether or not the opposition *really* "supports the troops."

The dead soldier is vital to how many nations are defined. It is little surprise that the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, dedicated to "all persons who served and did not return home" (March), is such a significant aspect of the Canadian War Memorial in Ottawa. The Unknown Soldier's utility as a galvanizing figure of grief is heightened by his anonymity. Living veterans, on the other hand, are a different, more problematic matter. No novel better captures Canada's difficulties honouring its returning soldiers

than Jack Hodgins's *Broken Ground*. In representing how Canada's fighting men were not adequately cared for after the First World War, Hodgins strikes at the heart of Canada's creation myth, though remains reticent to level a sustained critique of the idea of the nation as a unifying force.

Recent history has brought with it a seemingly endless parade of scandals at the Ministry of Veteran Affairs. Although the Conservative government had a particular fondness for promoting its support of the Canadian military, its relationship with veterans, particularly those returning from Afghanistan, has not been without its trials and tribulations. Julian Fantino, former Minister of Veteran Affairs, was heavily criticized for his handling of the New Veterans Charter and the treatment of soldiers' mental health. Furthermore, many also criticized the Ministry for neglected gravesites, financial mismanagement, cuts to the Veterans' Disability awards branch, and other grievances (Scotland). Fantino's demotion in early 2015 was an indication from the government that they intended to repair their relationship with disgruntled veterans.

Still, veterans in British Columbia are taking the government to court over changes to the military pension plan. The changes, the veterans argue, constitute a breach in the social contract struck between soldiers and the government in the aftermath of the First World War. They are building on Aboriginal case law by arguing that the government's actions do not uphold the standards of the "honour of the crown" (*Scott v. Canada*). Government lawyers are vociferously defending this potentially precedent setting litigation.

Like seemingly all military matters in Canada, the case between Canada's veterans and the government has its origins in the First World War. In 1917, just as

Canada was about to launch the Vimy Ridge attack, Prime Minister Robert Borden made Canadian soldiers a promise. He swore that they “need have no fear that the government and the country [would] fail to show just appreciation of [their] service” (qtd. in Scotland); it was Canada’s “first duty” to provide for the troops and he promised them that no soldier would accuse the government of “having broken faith” with its men: “Duty and decency demand[ed] that those . . . saving democracy [should] not find democracy a house of privilege, or a school of poverty and hardship” (qtd. in Scotland).

In a surprising move, government lawyers now claim that Borden’s wartime statements assuring soldiers of their well-being after the war were not meant to be taken seriously. They claim that they were merely the political rhetoric and maneuvering of the time. They were not “intended as commitments or solemn commitments” let alone an “alleged social contact or social covenant” with veterans (qtd. in Scotland). One character in *Broken Ground* anticipates this type of semantic equivocation: “Nobody lies anymore, they just change the meaning of the words” (259). This change of heart prompts a troubling question: if government lawyers are right and Borden’s promises were politics as usual and not solemn vows of loyalty, what are veterans to make of the current government’s commitments?

Broken Ground strives to provide a realistic representation of what was afforded to veterans upon their return. The novel focuses on the inhabitants of a fictional “soldier’s settlement,” Portuguese Creek, on Vancouver Island. Veterans of the First World War, who have been given land through the Soldiers’ Settlement Act, populate the fledgling settlement. The land, however, is less than ideal:

But they'd promised us we could farm here. The Minister of Agriculture had got himself so excited that he sat up all night in his nightshirt writing out his Land Settlement Act. "So the Returned Soldiers can live as white people should," was his way of putting it. But the man who tested the soil was incompetent, or drunk, or a liar. Most of this was good for nothing but the timber already on it. There were so many stumps so close together that – as the joke goes – when you bought a cow you looked for one that was narrow between the horns, so it wouldn't get hung up between them. (34)

Established in 1919, the Soldiers' Settlement Act granted veterans returning from the First World War free quarter-sections of land and \$2,500 in interest-free loans. Critics of the act noted, however, that much of the land granted was unoccupied because homesteaders had already abandoned it because of poor productivity and distance from railway shipping. The irony of the situation is not lost on the settlement's inhabitants: "If this was supposed to be our country's thank-you, a man can only wonder if he's been made a fool of" (34).

In Hodgins's hands, the marred terrain of Portuguese Creek serves as metaphor for the trauma experienced by soldiers in Europe. The pockmarked land reminds the settlers of the trenches and craters of Flanders: "The little farm he'd flattered with the name of Eden faded into the red-tinged dark and only the battlefield remained" (101). In order to clear the land of tree stumps, the farmers must employ explosives, no doubt recalling the bombastic noise of the western front: "A visitor from France would think the battles were still being waged" (91). One of the novel's many narrators, Charlie MacIntosh, loses his veteran father, Mac, to a bomb blast. As Mac approaches the

explosive to fix the fuse, Hodgins emphasizes the proximity of the war to the settlers' imagination by employing martial imagery: "Crouched over, making himself as small as he could, he came at it from the side – hand out, to yank on that fuse. That was how you snuck up on the Germans, he'd told me. Just in case the scoundrels weren't dead... You couldn't be sure the enemy was dead until you nudged him with your toe, he said. You might have to use your bayonet" (16). Mac survived France only to be blown up on Vancouver Island.

The settlers are haunted by their war experience, incapable of seeing a path to recovery. Matthew Pearson is conflicted about his own trauma: "A blow had been dealt that required recovery. I knew what the sceptics meant. Yet a man as blessed as I was with life and family and a piece of this earth to live on could not help being filled with gratitude" (117). There is little respite in memorials or religion, which cannot adequately accommodate the diversity of experiences and identities in the settlement. Matthew wonders, "What sort of church would it have to be to satisfy the variety of faiths and non-faiths that had been brought to this place? This was not France. This wasn't even Ontario" (117). This attitude is fairly anachronistic, more in keeping with the modern Canadian preoccupation with multiculturalism than with a typical Canadian outlook in 1922. For reasons that will be revealed later in the novel, much of *Broken Ground* seems filtered through a contemporary ideological lens. For Matthew, the only solace is in silence: "Sometimes it is better not to think of such things at all, and to contemplate, rather, the silence" (117).

Like *Execution's* Lieutenant Adam, Matthew cannot shake his sense of culpability over the wartime execution of his childhood friend, Hugh Corbett. Hugh was shot to

death by his own men for desertion. In reality, he wandered off during an episode of PTSD, complaining of headaches. Sentenced to death, he is executed by firing squad but not before he is plied with alcohol: “They had to carry him out, they’d got him too drunk to walk. They’d put his gas helmet on with the eyes to the back, so he couldn’t see the poor devils in the firing squad. His body sagged like some creature without a skeleton, even after they’d tied him to the post” (99).

Hodgins is careful to connect this tragedy with the enterprise of national myth making. One character jokes, “Get a headache in this army and they blow your bloody brains out to cure you” (100). One soldier notes that Hugh was the twentieth Canadian executed during the war: “Not a single Australian... The Aussie government refuses to let them do it. Not ours. Not Borden and his generals kissing London arse. Anything for bloody old King George” (100). For the soldiers in *Broken Ground*, Canadian units do not possess special qualities to ensure their success in the trenches. The subsequent construction of the First World War as Canada’s coming-out party is a comforting lie to consolidate national identity. Matthew feels no pride in that endeavour; he feels only culpability for perpetuating lies about war’s glories in his classroom: “I must have swallowed all the hogwash I’d assigned in my classroom. ‘Gunga Din’ and all that. God knows I’ve lain awake at night looking for that moment when I might have been responsible for causing boys... to sign up willingly for the slaughter” (100). This survivor’s guilt is why Matthew prefers silence: “And you wonder why you don’t hear me telling tales of my ‘war experiences’? I am ashamed of the words I would have to use” (101).

Hugh's experience was not entirely uncommon during the First World War. Canadian soldiers were subject to British military discipline. Throughout the war, the British army executed 306 enlisted men for desertion, cowardice, and murder. Of the 306 soldiers executed, 25 were Canadian (Morton 13). Of these men, the most senior was Sergeant William Alexander, who served admirably in the battles at Ypres and Vimy Ridge. He earned medals and promotions, though, during one offensive, he vanished at the crucial hour only to be found later behind the line. He was charged with desertion and sentenced to death by firing squad. The ultimate decision about Alexander's fate fell to Field Marshall Douglas Haig who, despite protestations from F.G. Scott, senior chaplain of the 1st Canadian Division, upheld the sentence (13). Such a severe punishment for a single act of desertion has intermittently generated controversy over the use of capital punishment during the First World War. Sergeant Alexander's older brother Archibald wrote, "I can hardly believe, that, for the first offence of desertion, that they were justified in passing that sentence... May the Lord have mercy on the man who judged him if he was wrong" (qtd. in Morton 14). In 2001, Canadian Veteran Affairs Minister Ron Duhamel announced that the names of executed soldiers would be added to Canada's Book of Remembrance. The British Defense Secretary similarly announced in 2006 that the government would issue full pardons to all soldiers executed during the First World War, including the Canadians. *Broken Ground* was published before these measures and, like McDougall's *Execution* or Findley's *The Wars*, seeks to redress previous injustices.

The most obvious image of the war's persistent presence in Portuguese Creek is a large, indefatigable fire on the outskirts of the settlement. That the fire will reach Portuguese Creek is inevitable. The fire stands in for the PTSD of the veteran farmers; it

exists in the background, waiting to reemerge and wreak havoc. For Matthew, the fire is indistinguishable from the creeping dread that defines his post-war life: “At first I thought I was feeling the usual flush of dread that would be pushed aside once I remembered where I was... But then I noticed there was something different in the air – a different sound, a different smell, a different colour in the light outside the window” (150-151).

A massive fire that destroys an entire town would be the climactic event for most novels. In *Broken Ground*, however, this event, which hints at apocalypse in much the same way the Halifax explosion in *Barometer Rising* does, merely ends the novel’s first section. Tanner Pearson declares, “This was the end of the world roaring towards us” (167), but the destruction is not the means by which the characters of *Broken Ground* achieve any semblance of epiphany or catharsis. In fact, the aftermath of the fire, who was killed and who survived, is put on hold in the novel’s second section in favour of an epistolary interlude between Matthew and Maud Pearson set during the war. If the fire that engulfs Portuguese Creek is not transformative, what narrative purpose does it serve? For Neta Gordon, the fire and the multitude of voices through which the fire is described evince Hodgins’ incredulity towards authority:

[T]he 1922 fire that ravages the fictional settlement of Portuguese Creek is depicted at the centre of Hodgins’s novel as a false climax described from various, sometimes conflicting points of view. His subversion of the apocalyptic narrative, however, is not contrived in service of honouring the non-elect or condemning a failure of humanity; rather, it operates as an almost comic critique of the attempt to create and uphold any myth of a nationally unifying originary event. (62)

The fire has all the hallmarks of a founding myth, but is never granted that status by Hodgins, at least initially. First, he forgoes depicting the aftermath of the fire in favour of describing the war experience Matthew refuses to discuss. Second, Charlie MacIntosh reveals in the novel's third section, "A Helmet for Bees: 1996," that the novel's entire first section, "Voices from Portuguese Creek," was based on interviews conducted by "a local fellow twenty years before... [who] wrote it up the way he imagined we might have told it if we had told it all at once quite soon after the fire" (256). If Montgomery's tendencies toward Romance in *Rilla of Ingleside* were a Trojan horse for a realist critique, these belated revelations in *Broken Ground* confirm the novel's realism to have been a decoy for historiographic metafiction. If contemporary Canadian war writers might be considered Findley's children, Hodgins is probably the favourite, though even Hodgins stops short of Findley's postmodern incredulity by allowing for the possibility of a community to be forged in deference to a false narrative.

In the novel's third section, Jeff Macken, a great-grandson of one of the original settlers of Portuguese Creek, screens a fictionalized film adaptation of the fire. With few eyewitnesses left to consult, the film is based on what is found in the novel's first section – a highly dramatized collage of interviews produced in the 1970s. The film is one of multiple attempts to "set the story straight"; as Charlie MacIntosh points out, "There would always be another voice to hear from, or another version, or something new just remembered, or an older memory reconsidered" (256). The novel's final section reads as quintessential historiographic metafiction, wherein the author proves the fallibility of narrative and conveys the impossibility of telling a "true" story. With so many voices

competing for authority in *Broken Ground*, the reader is compelled to question the accuracy of any of their claims.

Yet, the impulse to narrativize history, however dubious, has an air of inevitability in the novel. By refusing to afford the 1922 fire status as originary myth, Hodgins questions the authority of these types of stories, but implies that such an appealing narrative will always win out in the end. Matthew is resigned to this inevitability as well. At one point, he stops himself from correcting an American character, Al Hueffner, who believes the First World War began in 1917: “He knew better than to try to convince Hueffner... Hueffner already had the look of a man who thought they were pulling his leg, who didn’t want to upset them by challenging his version things” (261). When Matthew has the opportunity to tell his truth about the war to the students in his classroom, he balks at the chance. Correcting the march of history proves to be too heavy a burden:

When the history curriculum dictated that he could not avoid the Great War, Pearson confined himself to the facts and figures, so that it seemed as dull and distant as the War of the Roses. In his later years he would sometimes offer opinions, but only those that had become commonplace by then... His lessons then became explorations and discussions of individual responsibilities and ethics. He led them to no definitive answers, of course, but it was said that his students went home feeling as though they’d experienced something as unsettling as war themselves, and had to sort out what they thought and felt. (329)

Although Matthew is incapable of teaching the war in its horrific totality, he gains some measure of satisfaction by demonstrating to his students that, in such matters, there are “no definitive answers.”

If “truth” remains elusive and answers unsatisfactory, what function does the young Macken’s film serve? Charlie asks this question and, in doing so, gestures toward the galvanizing practical purpose of art based on history:

I wondered what affect this movie would have upon future accounts of the War’s survivors and the fire of ‘22. Was this the ‘true’ story we were witnessing now in this world of popcorn and rustling candy wrappers? Would it become the true story, erasing from our memories the versions we’d heard a thousand times from those who’d been there and from those whose parents had been there? (329-330)

While it may not be perfect or true, Macken’s film and other art like it have the possibility of accomplishing what the war and the fire could not by providing the means by which community can be constructed and nationhood maintained. This can be accomplished only when memory gives way to history. As memory recedes from the foreground, it becomes the responsibility of history, which is to say narrative, to preserve a serviceable version of the story. When the film is screened in 1996, Charlie, one of the few remaining who actually remembers the fire, is an old man; he will not always be there to provide corrections. In that sense, Macken’s film is something akin to a memorial. It is a poor substitute for the truth, but provides a framework to make sense of the past and how it influences the present. Gordon writes, “Hodgins’s novel concedes that the ‘true’ story is less significant than stories that provide a means for social cohesion” (64).

The end of *Broken Ground* depicts a community being formed with the 1922 fire as its founding myth. For the veterans of the novel, it is easier to discuss the fire than the war: “Even though it was probably true that the Returned Soldiers would never get over the war, they hardly talked about it. What they talked about instead was the fire” (300). The fire, with its limited reach and relatively few casualties, is easier to grasp. For the characters that avoided the war, and lived through the fire, it is easier to take issue with the mythologization of the fire, because they remember its aftermath differed significantly from later hyperbolic accounts. Charlie remembers earlier versions of the fire story as being distinctly less dramatic: “before the night was over they had begun, some of them, to remember themselves as figures in a ridiculous comedy, scurrying around like frightened mice trying to save their hides” (300). In the subsequent decades, however, the fire takes on mythic proportions.

The third section of the novel is comprised of Charlie’s memoir. He is the producer at work, acutely aware of the process of selection and omission that goes into recounting historical events. As he watches Macken’s film, he is “disappointed to see how Matthew Pearson had been pushed to the background in the film, but it is well known around here (with amused tolerance) that I had made Pearson something of the main figure in my version of things” (256-257). Like Connor’s *Romances* or even MacLennan’s literary nationalism, Macken’s film is less concerned with historical verisimilitude than with nation building.

Reading Hodgins’s representation of nationhood in tandem with Benedict Anderson’s much-lauded book on nationalism, *Imagined Communities* (1982), reveals the efficacy of Macken’s film adaptation of the 1922 fire. Fernand Dumont defines the nation

as “a grouping by reference: people are brought together in a nation through common symbolism and ideological discourse” (323). For Dumont, society is largely constructed by what it interprets itself to be. The veracity of a nation’s symbols and other points of reference are secondary to their prevalence and power. This dynamic is certainly evident in Canada’s continued identification with international peacekeeping.

Dumont’s view of identity is akin to Anderson’s work on the imaginative nature of communities. Anderson writes that the nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined” (6). *Broken Ground* depicts the process through which that style is refined over decades:

Everyone had a story. Details neglected in one telling would be reinstated in the next. In the years afterward, everyone would tell their own version of the fire at every opportunity – as their children have done, and now their grandchildren.

(300)

Charlie is disappointed that the fire is the climax of Macken’s film because it was not the climax of his life; it was a significant but random occurrence that did not split his life into two distinct phases. For Jeff Macken, however, who needs a lens through which to make sense of the continued existence of Portuguese Creek, a harsh place seemingly at the end of the world, the 1922 fire is a useful starting point. For Canada, a young country in need of an identity, Vimy Ridge and the First World War were similarly useful to those who sought to define Canadian identity.

Throughout *Broken Ground*, Hodgins takes aim at the quintessential Canadian myths about war and the men who fight. For him, the First World War was not the crucible from which Canada emerged fully formed:

Hodgins intends that the metaphorical link between the First World War and the settlers' war with the land be read backwards: it is not the case that war experience—or even expertise—proves a productive framework for subsequent experience, as in a traditional developmental plot. Rather, the settlers' failure with the land operates as pathetic parody of war. (Gordon 63)

Though Hodgins is committed to problematizing the First World War's importance to Canadian identity, his critique falls short of questioning nationalism as an enterprise. It is clear that Hodgins does not subscribe to a Whig or Enlightenment view of history, wherein each calamity and tragedy serves as a catalyst for the creation of a better world, but the final section of *Broken Ground* longs for the same sense of belonging that these ideologies promise to facilitate. The fire becomes the defining myth for Portuguese Creek, but this is not necessarily represented as a betrayal. In fact, it seems to have a positive effect. The film's screening is juxtaposed with the church that Matthew so distrusted being installed at Portuguese Creek. Macken even alters the historical timeline to include this momentous occasion in his film: "It is little wonder young Macken moved the theft of the church ahead by a year for his movie" (300). Charlie jokes that the church gave the town its "soul," but that oversimplification will now be true in the official version. He gets some satisfaction by telling Matthew and Tanner Pearson's story: "At least I have written him and his father back into the story from which the movie had all but erased them" (345). Their story, however, will die with Charlie and be inevitably

overtaken by the dominant narrative. Stories that do not fit neatly into the town's creation myth will remain marginalized.

Ultimately, Hodgins adeptly employs the postmodern strategies perfected by Findley, but does not adequately heed the crucial warnings of *The Wars*. While *The Wars* provides a blueprint for Canadians to become cognizant of and resist Great War mythologization, *Broken Ground* is satisfied with merely identifying how these comforting national myths form. Hodgins's inability to break from the desire for community and closure is disappointing because, like the earliest literary attempts to represent the First World War, it cannot resist the undeniable appeal of Romance. Gordon writes,

Hodgins's ironic portrayal of social fragmentation cannot help but express a desire for an ideal community... It is in this sense that Hodgins's novel—though often critical of myths associated with the national collective—expresses a desire for the unifying gesture promised by the mythology of Canada's First World War experience. (61)

Recognition without resistance is a half-measure. Canada's much discussed incredulity toward metanarrative once again disintegrates in the face of militarism. Acquiescing to a seemingly inevitable narrative for the sake of social cohesion is dangerous when the narrative of Canada's involvement in the First World War, though seemingly unshakeable, is still being written and rewritten. Without careful stewardship, yesterday's promises can be recast as platitudes for the sake of political expediency. It is a process that is far from inevitable. The experiences of yesterday's veterans do not necessarily guarantee the security of veterans today. One need not speculate how First World War

veterans would react to this resignation; their novels actively fought against figuring their sacrifice as a necessary test that allowed Canada to graduate from colony to nation. The tacit acceptance in *Broken Ground* of narrative and myth suggests that the anti-war literary project of Charles Yale Harrison and others failed. Their resistance to national myth-making becomes moot because social cohesion, even in service of a lie, is ultimately more important. Hodgins's depiction of art's function is not personal, but national. This dynamic is reversed in Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers*.

A Work of Architecture That Has No Meaning: Monuments Intentional and Unintentional in *The Stone Carvers*

The fraught process of paying tribute to those lost in war, hinted at in *Broken Ground*, is most directly synthesized in Jane Urquhart's *The Stone Carvers*. When the reader is first introduced to the novel's protagonist, Klara, one of her main eccentricities is her monomaniacal insistence that a war memorial be constructed in her Ontario hometown of Shoneval. The town council politely humours this desire though it has no intention of acting on it. After all, Shoneval only lost one person to the conflict. It is revealed through flashbacks that Klara's desire for a war memorial stems from the fact that her lover, Eamon, was that one Shoneval resident killed in the First World War. Klara, the novel makes clear, is a dedicated vessel of memory: "Their assumption that she was geist-ridden – old enough at almost forty to be surrounded by ghosts – was true enough but what the men didn't know was that this affliction gave Klara enough spiritual company to make her life quite full" (30). Klara is not haunted, to borrow Birney's phrase, by a lack of ghosts – far from it. This way of life seems strange to the members of Shoneval fortunate enough to escape the collective trauma of the First World War and its ensuing grief, but it would not be to the majority of Canadians who had lost someone in Europe. Klara is collective grief made personal. She is not, however, particularly distressed by her status as Shoneval's resident spinster:

Klara had her memories, a cemetery full of dead family members, a village from which most of her schoolmates had fled, a brother who had vanished, an ancient religion replete with narrative, the knowledge of the village's mythology, two

difficult skills learned from two masters... She had also something that only a very few spinsters have: independence and a past. (30)

Having ownership of a “past” is highly prized in *The Stone Carvers*. The novel begins in earnest with Shoneval’s members reiterating the well-worn myth of the town’s founding. The importance of having mastery over a historical narrative is emphasized throughout the novel. According to Urquhart, this is a particular concern for Canadians: “I think [history and mythology] purport to be different but are dangerously alike. I think that in Canada there’s a great hunger for mythology... simply because we haven’t had it” (Wyile, *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 88-89). In another Urquhart novel, *Changing Heaven*, a character remarks, “In Canada much of the past has been thrown away. No one cares. No one records it. It was very hard for me, losing the past like that” (183). Klara is determined to ensure that she does not fall prey to the same fate.

Findley may have been the first so-called war outsider to write serious war fiction but it is in the dawn of the new millennium that war fiction returns to where it began in the nineteenth century: the realm of historical fiction. Set in the first half of the twentieth century, but reaching back to Bavaria in the late nineteenth century, *The Stone Carvers* weaves together the story of ordinary people transformed by art. The story concerns three generations of a family as it explores the devastation of the First World War. What the novel synthesizes is the human need to remember and memorialize. In an interview with Herb Wyile, Urquhart says, “The past seems to me to be multi-dimensional, partly because it involves a narrator and a narrative, whereas the present is something you’re experiencing. The past is a story being told, and as such it takes on a different tone and a different shade” (*Speaking in the Past Tense* 80). In this regard, like Harrison seventy

years before her, Urquhart contests Cobley's trepidation about the soldierly compulsion to "name the unnameable."

Like *The Wars*, *The Stone Carvers* is about the difficulties inherent to representing war. Cobley argues that since "all narrative renderings produce rather than reproduce war experience" (15), the "renderings" of the war insider may "be seen as the source of a certain ideological complicity with the war" (17). Therefore, for Cobley, *The Wars* is more reliable as an anti-war text than, for example, *Generals Die in Bed* or *All Quiet on the Western Front* because its epistemological distance from the event cures it of the impulse to exonerate the combatant. If *The Stone Carvers* is any indication, Urquhart is skeptical of this idea. Gordon writes that Urquhart is "unconvinced that experiential distance, especially as it is signalled by the self-conscious literariness in postmodern fiction, necessarily gives rise to a more stable ideological position or a more disinterested depiction of the horrors of war" (60). The novel, then, is about the function of memorials and monuments or any artistic renderings that emerge from trauma. Urquhart questions "the authority often granted to artistic reconstructions of experience over experience itself, as well as the ambivalent role of the artist as both a commemorator and exploiter of war" (60). In this regard, Urquhart's novel is similar to the concerns expressed by Authers. Personalizing the political is not necessarily positive. The novel also gently rebukes the endlessly recursive central conceit of *The Wars*:

Urquhart is ambivalent about the very recreation process that postmodern pastiche depends on... she turns her attention to the artist whose work derives from the experiences of others. Urquhart is able to confront the pitfalls of such an artistic approach without transforming historical data into mere fodder for endless

undertakings in skepticism by employing a realistic mode. (61)

As Urquhart says, “I can’t comment about the kind of research that historians do, because I’m not a historian, but I think it’s different in that the writer of fiction doesn’t have to be utterly accurate... the facts are points of embarkation for me rather than a final destination” (*Speaking in the Past Tense* 82).

Urquhart depicts the construction of a vast monument, spearheaded by real life sculptor Walter Allward, to the Canadian soldiers who were killed at Vimy Ridge. For the characters of *The Stone Carvers*, to remember is to approach the divine. Their bodies maimed and their worldview destroyed, it is only the act of remembering that allows for transcendence. To what extent, however, is the construction of a massive memorial an act of equivocation or even erasure? For Jay Winter, “Transcendence was a privilege, not a common place experience. To remember the anxiety of 1,500 days of war necessarily entailed how to forget; in the interwar years those who couldn’t obliterate the nightmares were locked in mental asylums throughout Europe” (2). Memorials, due to their objectives, necessarily resist experimentation and innovation. Winter argues that this traditionalism was a wartime necessity: “Traditional modes of seeing the war, while at times less challenging intellectually or philosophically, provided a way of remembering which enabled the bereaved to live with their losses, and perhaps to leave them behind” (5). Memorials, by their nature, are solipsistic and run the risk of confirming Authers’s fear about war and consumption. Worse still, they can become tourist traps.

On the popular travel site “Trip Advisor,” the Vimy Ridge Memorial in France has 424 user-generated reviews. For the most part, they are positive; 379 reviewers rate their experience at the memorial as “excellent”: the memorial was awarded a Travellers’

Choice Award in 2014. “Trip Advisor” user “MrsDetail” says, “It’s hard to express in words the emotions that this memorial stirs; Love, gratitude, commitment, honour, devotion, patriotism, tragedy, loss... Thank you for your sacrifice!” (Trip Advisor). User “Kilage” from Oakville, Ontario, has more practical concerns: “It was an \$80 CND trip via train (Dec 2014) + \$20.00 Euro taxi each way. The train leaves from Gare du Nord and travels to Arras” (Trip Advisor). “Pippa W” was not impressed: “When I visited the Canadian guides were conspicuous by their absence. The site was poorly signposted & the visitor centre was minimalist... Vimy Ridge is regarded in Canada as almost sacred land... Try harder Parks Canada” (Trip Advisor). The vast majority of the comments on this site reiterate the central idea conveyed by Harper’s memorial speech – that Vimy Ridge constitutes a defining moment for Canadian nationalism. Reviewing such “hallowed ground” on a site meant to inform consumers inevitably transforms what is meant to be a solemn tribute to the dead into a commodity.

Reading *The Stone Carvers* in tandem with modern theories on monuments, memory, and ritual elevates the discussion of the figure of the artist in the novel. No examination of the politics and rhetoric of monuments can begin without mention of Alois Riegl, the first Conservator General of monuments in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1903, Riegl drafted a law that attempted to define what Europeans ought to preserve. Due to rapid modernization, European cities were pressed to decide what of their heritage was to be torn down and what was to be rebuilt and in what style. In his seminal essay, “The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin,” Riegl sought to codify what was to be protected and how one might balance the value of one monument over another. The formally innovative essay would have a greater impact than

Riegl's attempts at legislation, which never became law (Nelson and Olin 2). In *Monuments and Memory: Made and Unmade*, editors Robert S. Nelson and Margaret Olin characterize Riegl's legacy as "a love for the signs of the passage of time as well as an enthusiasm for the new" (2). Riegl distinguished between "intentional monument," structures built deliberately to be grand and important, and "unintentional monument," edifices and places that only acquire grandeur in retrospect. What becomes a monument in reality, however, is determined by a multitude of economic, legal, and political forces.

Monuments are not just works of art or architecture. They possess certain qualities: "inertness, opacity, permanence, remoteness, distance, preciousity, and grandeur" (3). They must also be, to a certain extent, accessible. This is where their power resides – monuments, like Macken's film, have the ability to guide cultural memory. Harper's speech at Vimy is a prime example. In the midst of great upheavals, it is usually monuments that are among the first to be destroyed: "Aztec temples in Mexico after Cortez, Christian churches in Constantinople after the Ottoman conquest" (4), or, in recent memory, the toppling of statues of Saddam Hussein. As Nelson and Olin write, "Because social turmoil breaks continuity with tradition and the immediate past, new monuments can represent an uncontested version of the past" (4). If memory is the process, monuments are the product.

Urquhart's characters are keenly aware of this complex process, even before the First World War irrevocably alters their lives. Father Gstyr, the ostensible founder of the community of Shoneval, has a vision of a castle built on a road so high that no one can reach it. The language employed by Gstyr echoes the rhetoric Riegl employs in his essay,

suggesting that what Gstir wants built is not just a church or a castle but a monument as well:

What I have in mind, though, is a work of architecture that has no function, a chambered sculpture, if you like. One left entirely alone after it is built. One that perches on its mountain and lets the elements play with it, lets sun and shadow and nothing else into its rooms. (52-53)

When Klara's father, Joseph Becker, asks if Father Gstir would not like the structure to be repaired, he is resolute: "I should like to see how this construction decays, how long it takes before it becomes a ruin...it is my contention that only the greatest works make beautiful ruins" (53). Remembering Father Gstir, Joseph encourages his granddaughter Klara to "Always remember the bones... They last the longest and explain the life history of people, monuments, sculpture. Without them, everything falls apart" (54). Like Riegl, Father Gstir and Joseph Becker seem to favour the idea of "unintentional monuments." The castle at the end of the road gains significance only if it is allowed to decay and show the wear of centuries. This is in sharp contrast to how Urquhart depicts Allward's obsessive vision for the memorial at Vimy Ridge. By economic and political necessity, Allward is constantly being harangued about budgets and deadlines by Ottawa functionaries, his work must be important immediately.

Gstir and Joseph's notions of the permanence and impermanence of monuments evince a sophisticated understanding of how monuments function in society. They both grasp that the monument "expresses the power and sense of the society that gives it meaning, and at the same time obscures competing claims for authority and meaning" (Nelson and Olin 7). A monument is designed to be permanent but, in fact, "changes

constantly as it renegotiates ideals, status, and entitlement, defining the past to affect the present and future” (7). The French writer François-René de Chateaubriand wrote, “A monument is only venerable in so much as a long history of the past has imprinted the black of centuries on its vaults” (qtd. in Nelson and Olin 1). The sheer magnitude of casualties in the First World War, and the enormity of the collective grief, necessitated the self-conscious creation of monuments as sites of mourning. There were not centuries to spare. The grief was too all-encompassing for Chateaubriand’s requisite waiting period. Allward’s memorial is a “huge urn he had designed to hold grief” (377).

When one uses the term “memory” in relation to the First World War, the first text that comes to mind is likely Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Although his work pioneered research into the war’s legacy, his theories have been increasingly questioned in recent years. Fussell’s “dependence on high art and culture” (Connelly 3) impeded his understanding of the realities of wartime remembrance – what was happening on the streets and in churches. For Fussell, the First World War resulted in the emergence of an abiding sense of irony that made the post-war world fundamentally different from the pre-war world. This was of little practical use to those grieving in the war’s aftermath. Modernism and other forms of the radical avant-garde could express the sense of outrage felt by many people during and after the war but, according to Winter, “it could not heal” (5). The strength of traditional forms of art and culture, like war memorials, “lay in their power to mediate bereavement” (5). Unsurprisingly, monuments and war memorials are completely ignored by Fussell due to the fact that few of them can be considered high art and even less are ironic in nature.

Alan Borg writes, “It is probably because they are so common that [war] memorials seldom attract much attention, although they represent the biggest communal art project ever attempted” (qtd. in Connelly 4). Recent decades, however, have seen the emergence of a new genre of academic investigation relating to the First World War: there have been several books and studies devoted to “the memory of the Great War.” This development has happened in tandem with a thematic shift in Canadian war novels that is also concerned with collective memory. Two emblematic examples are Adrian Gregory’s *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-1946* (1994) and Jay Winter’s *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995). These texts often employ the term “collective memory” as a means to understand the massive public response to the First World War in its immediate aftermath. For these historians, the memory of the war “was constructed by official attempts to orchestrate remembrance and by genuine popular inspiration” (Connelly 1). An intense communion with the dead, whether through institutional religion or mysticism, defined the post-war years. The writings of Winter and Gregory have demonstrated that official efforts at memorialisation often served a dual purpose: these efforts allowed for sincere expressions of grief and also served to “buttress a socially conservative message” (1). In order to maintain continuity with tradition and social values, memorialisation emphasized that the soldiers had not died in vain and that it was incumbent upon the survivors to protect the status quo to render themselves worthy of the dead.

Urquhart’s representation of the desire, however problematic, to honour and remember the dead seems to be in conversation with the recent scholarship on collective memory. As a result, her portrayal of the construction of the memorial at Vimy Ridge is

one of the most nuanced elements of the novel. The real-life Walter Allward, according to Urquhart, is used in the text “in a purely fictitious manner” (391). In the novel, Allward strives to avoid historic specificity when creating his art. He works, therefore, primarily in an allegorical mode:

He saw the huge twin pillars commemorating those who spoke French and those who spoke English, the allegorical figures with downcast and uplifted faces, and in the valley beneath the work of art, the flesh and bones and blood of the dead stirring in the mud. (267)

He chastises Klara, “I tell everybody, *everybody* who works for me that there are to be no independent acts, no theatrical feats of originality” (336). Surprisingly, given the nature of the project, he strives for ahistoricity, and therefore, permanence. The type of stone he covets “must carry within it no previous history of organic life” (67). Gordon points out that the models he uses for the sculpture are, to him, “too specifically human to be fully interesting” but he has “huge compassion” for the sculpted figures that are “perfection[s] in plaster” (350). The First World War provides Allward with the opportunity to fulfill his vision on a grand scale, to create something “perfect enough that it would seem to have been built by a vanished race of brilliant giants” (269). In striving for the permanence of the allegorical and the universal, however, Allward neglects the personal and specific – what Arendt called “the brutal naked event itself” (245). His monomaniacal devotion to allegory constitutes, at best, a benign erasure and, at worst, an exploitation of the war dead.

When Allward interacts with a legitimate war veteran, Giorgio Vigamonti, the schism between artist and witness is even more pronounced. Allward is figured as a

“general” and his sculptors are “troops” but he is detached from the impetus for the memorial’s construction; he seems to forget why the building site stinks of death. Giorgio, of course, can remember: “I remember that. I remember that, during the war, even the few flowers we saw smelled of decay, like they were rotting” (288). Allward turns to his stone and is thankful that “there is nothing putrid about it... so clean, so clean” (289). In Urquhart’s depiction, Allward becomes like Findley – able, thanks to experiential and emotional distance, to dismiss collective grief and trauma in favour of the insular processes of art.

Klara, on the other hand, is unable to divorce her artistic self from her grieving self. Allward conceives of the war only in the abstract; it is almost always at a remove. Initially, he is barely capable of acknowledging the war is happening: “Allward walked to his studio like a ghost from the past who has no knowledge of the present... As if he were an arctic navigator determined to find the Northwest Passage, he was frozen into his own discoveries, unable to stop commemorating the might of empire” (266). Klara, as the novel’s version of a war insider, is at odds with Allward’s outsider perspective. Gordon writes, “The memory of the war insider, the witness, is thus made to struggle for attention against a narrative focus on the work of the commemorator to the point where the witness herself is almost entirely ‘erased’” (64). To counteract this, Klara rebels.

As Klara illicitly carves her dead lover’s face into the marble, her actions indicate a Proustian level of remembrance and the processes of memory are conflated with artistic practice: “She stood on the ladder, eyes squeezed shut, scraping these images from the deepest recesses of her memory as if using a sculpting tool on the inner curve of her skull” (333). Her carving is an act of remembering and, as she continues, she feels “as if

she were in the ghost of an embrace, as if he or she were haunting the stone” (333).

Upon discovering Klara’s carvings, Allward is furious his perfect allegorical vision has been altered. Yet, when he hears Klara’s story of love and loss, he relents and allows her to carve Eamon’s face into the memorial; he also allows her to carve Eamon’s name into the monument. Urquhart is relatively silent on what prompts Allward to change his vision for the monument, which had previously seemed so intractable. She gestures towards the most common tension in conversations of monuments and memory – the collective and the personal. He thinks,

The face was becoming a portrait, he could see that, but beyond that the expression had about it the trustfulness of someone who did not know he would ever be missing, lost from the earth. This woman had brought a personal retrospection to his monument, and had by doing so allowed life to enter it. She had carved the uncomplicated face of prewar youth, children who were unaware they would be made extinct by war. No subsequent generation, Allward suddenly knew, would ever achieve such innocence. (340)

The desire to inject the personal into something so inconceivably large is certainly an aspect of the novel’s representation of memorialisation. Given Father Gstyr’s vision at the novel’s outset and Urquhart’s sophisticated understanding of how monuments function in society, however, there is likely another reason why Allward was willing to compromise his vision. It made his monument, to a certain extent, “unintentional.”

For Allward, Klara provides a little bit of sprezzatura, or studied nonchalance, to the Vimy Ridge Memorial. For Riegl, unintentional monuments were the most powerful. Monuments with evidence of time’s passage were instantly affecting. Klara provides this

“retrospection.” Allward’s obsession with what particular Yugoslavian stone to use and his tyrannical supervision of the monument’s design necessarily makes the monument contrived. Although it is a work of architecture with no real function, its significance is unearned because it is divorced from both time and experience. Like Urquhart herself, Allward strives to make art that derives from someone else’s experience. In order to counteract his anxiety about that fact, he employs allegory to transcend historic specificity. Inspired by Klara, he combines the specific and the general to create a work meant for a specific time but is, in fact, for all time. Klara is able to turn an aspect of the monument, however tiny, into an unplanned-for accident and that makes it uncontrived and worthy of Riegl’s criteria.

Urquhart provides a short history of the Memorial at Vimy Ridge after it is completed and Klara and Allward go home. Its beginning is auspicious: “The larger, the more impressive the monument, the more miraculous its constructions, the more it seems to predict its own fall from grace... No one cares” (378). The opening ribbon is cut by the fascist-sympathizing King Edward VIII, soon to abdicate, which in itself feels like an ominous historical accident. Shortly thereafter, the Second World War threatens the memorial’s very existence, causing Allward to react with “panic and rage” (380). It is like Father Gstyr’s castle that cannot be reached. It is allowed to decay and wither. It is subject to the whims of chance. It is under constant threat though, like all great monuments, it endures.

Klara’s addition to the monument saves it from hermetic ahistoricity. Her personalization of the sculpture, however, is not wholly uncomplicated. What is actually accomplished by personalizing collective grief? Does it constitute yet another erasure?

For Gordon, “Klara’s achievement in *The Stone Carvers* reads as a fantasy of an author struggling with her own desire for balance in the recreation of horrific experience; the novel enacts an outsider’s desire to ratify the work of war insiders who really just want to forget what they have experienced” (70). In addition to being a meditation on creating art from trauma, *The Stone Carvers* is concerned with denial and disappearance. Klara’s brother Tillman, seemingly born with “wanderlust,” disappears frequently, putting tremendous strain on the Becker family. He meets an Italian named Refuto whose habit of denying everything teaches Tillman about the “the burden of denial” (209). After the war, his attempts to relate his war experience are stifled at every turn. His sister cannot bear to hear it. His eventual lover, Recouvrir, whose name denotes both “to recover” and “to cover up,” listens to Tillman’s story but, due to the language barrier, understands very little. Though his relationship with Recouvrir brings Tillman some semblance of solace, it does not heal his wounds so much as scab them over. Giorgio is also a veteran who works on the memorial but his story, unlike Klara’s, does not get told.

Ultimately, it is the artist and war outsider, Allward, who gives meaning to Klara’s vision by praising and sanctioning it. Though Urquhart does significant work to expand the criteria by which one can be considered a “war insider” to include those, especially women, who are not typically considered veterans, the voices of those who saw the atrocities of the First World War are largely erased. Allward allows Klara’s personal intrusion on his vision because it affords his monument the credibility of the war insider, something he could not achieve on his own. After having carved Eamon’s face and name, Klara is able to move on and pursue a relationship with Giorgio. Grief no longer defines her. Her ensuing happiness indicates that perhaps Klara did not want to

remember after all, but rather wanted permission to forget: “no matter how much it is cherished, an absent face that is a fixed reference becomes tyrannical, and tyranny eventually demands revolt, escape” (332). In this passage, Urquhart suggests, “certain forms of remembering may prove to be unsafe, that the capacity to forget may be essential to any war participant” (Gordon 69-70). The reader is forced to confront whether or not this is also a hidden objective of the processes of memorialisation. Though monuments are sites of memory, perhaps too they alleviate and externalize the guilt of forgetting.

In his 2007 Vimy speech, Stephen Harper spoke to the power of monuments to preserve the continuum of memory: “The Veterans of Vimy passed their stories to their children, who passed it to theirs, who passed it to us, who are passing it to our children thousands of whom are with us today” (Harper). The Vimy Ridge Memorial does not belong to the war insider, whose specific memories and experience can only obscure the narrative of collective memory. The monument now belongs to tourists, politicians, and Internet commenters. *The Stone Carvers* asks if the memorial was ever the purview of the veterans and the missing it was meant to honour. In the novel, the construction of the monument allows those not directly affected by the First World War to remember while affording those directly implicated the permission to forget. *The Stone Carvers* demonstrates that the vagaries of memorialisation always result in erasure of some kind. Monuments do not allow for much nuance: they are conservative, allegorical, and solipsistic carriers of meaning.

CONCLUSION

Never Forgotten, Never Remembered: The Canadian Soldier at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century

The first Canadian representation of a “soldier” in the context of the First World War is in Helen Stirling’s *A Soldier of the King: A True Story of a Young Canadian Hero*.

Published in 1915, the titular “soldier” is not a uniformed combatant in the strictest sense, but a young boy named Charlie Russell who is stricken with an unnamed fatal illness. In his final days, he summons enough strength to raise funds for the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children. The source of Charlie’s courage is his heroes: Canadian and British soldiers. He is obsessed with Canada’s fighting men and has internalized the typical rhetoric associated with duty, service, and sacrifice:

He seemed never to tire of hearing of the brave doings of his soldier boys, and Piper Findlater, who, sorely wounded, piped his Highlanders up Dargai Heights and inspired them to make the charge which meant so much to England, in the struggle in India, became one of his best beloved heroes. His father seemed to know, so well, too, just when he needed to hear this story and told it to him over and over again. (23-24)

He repeats the chorus of his favourite song, “The Little Soldier,” as his mantra: “When I’m big, I’ll be a soldier / That is what I’ll be” (50). Even though Charlie draws high praise for his work raising money for the hospital, the little soldier is fading. Charlie’s father makes a final appeal: “You’ll win all right. Piper – you must, you know, you can’t

help it – you're British" (51). The little boy dies, however, and "another brave soldier passed out of the trenches to his new and wonderful billet" (54).

For Susan Fisher, Charlie is a successor to the "pious, doomed child so common in nineteenth-century evangelical literature" (118). He is a trope meant to interweave the war into the distinctly Christian pattern of death and resurrection that is still so enmeshed in war rhetoric and imagery. This argument is well founded, but in the wake of a century of war writing, it is possible to read Charlie as a stand-in for the Canadian public's relationship to its fighting men and women. Like Charlie, Canadians have drawn on the Canadian soldier for a multitude of reasons. Whether as aspiration or inspiration, the Canadian soldier has proven to be a highly adaptable and pragmatic touchstone for Canadian identity and social cohesion. Just as Charlie Russell draws strength and comfort from highly romanticized stories of death and glory on the battlefield, so too have everyday Canadians. Furthermore, it is undeniable that Canadian governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have found significant political capital in the unimpeachable figure of the Canadian soldier as well. One needs look no further than Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* for evidence of how Canada's understanding of war can tend toward the juvenile. The same novel has been marketed as a violent and scathing anti-war novel and as a young adult novel.

How the idealized figure of the soldier is represented and remembered, however, can result in friction and fractures. Nowhere are these tensions felt more acutely than in the efforts at memorialisation surrounding the centenary of the First World War. Though the figure of the Canadian soldier is beyond reproach, fissures can be detected in the vagaries of collective memory. The commemoration of the centenary is well under way.

In the coming years, Canadians will mark the hundred-year anniversaries of the individual battles in Belgium and France where the Canadian corps acquitted itself so well. There will be conferences, monographs, and memorial services. There will be laments for the unprecedented loss of life. After all, Canada lost approximately one percent of its population during the war, though the casualties suffered by Russia, France, and Germany dwarf even these numbers. The fraught processes of memory and memorialisation represented in Canadian war novels by Harrison, Findley, Hodgins, and Urquhart will be more conspicuous than ever in the coming years.

How private interests and the Canadian government mark these events will be subject to close scrutiny. One particular project of collective remembrance has already come in for much criticism. The *Never Forgotten* National Memorial, colloquially known as *Mother Canada*, a \$25 Million, twenty-four-metre statue to be constructed on Cape Breton, has served as the terrain for an intense debate between historians, veterans, and private interests on how to appropriately commemorate those soldiers who never made it back to Canada. The mammoth 10-storey statue will feature a cloaked female figure with her arms outstretched towards Europe beckoning Canadian soldiers who lost their lives overseas to return home.

Attempts to secure funding to construct the memorial have been rife with controversy. A *Globe and Mail* editorial took issue with the memorial, calling it “offensively tasteless” and a “hubristic act of arrogant unoriginality” (Globe Editorial). Valerie Bird, a World War II veteran who lives on Cape Breton remarked, “It is vulgar and ostentatious... It certainly doesn’t belong in a national park, and I don’t think it’s going to do a darn thing for veterans... I think the idea of this horrible thing offends

veterans. I find it difficult to find words. This is a monstrosity” (Barber). The mostly privately funded memorial on public land has also drawn the ire of former Parks Canada officials, despite the fact that Parks Canada, at the behest of the Harper government, has pledged \$100,000 to the project.

The *Never Forgotten* memorial has also come under attack for being redundant. The Vimy Foundation, an organization that strives to preserve and promote Canada’s First World War legacy, points out that there is already a memorial statue known as *Mother Canada*. The statue, *Canada Bereft*, also sometimes known as *Mother Canada*, located at Vimy, was constructed from Walter Allward’s design in 1936. Vimy Foundation Chairman Christopher Sweeney contacted the *Never Forgotten* Memorial Foundation about a possible name change and received a letter of response from their legal representation: “Basically they had trademarked the term Mother Canada and were applying it to merchandise that’s going to be associated with this Never Forgotten monument that’s planned for Cape Breton” (CBC).

It is no coincidence that the *Never Forgotten* Memorial is so proprietary about the *Mother Canada* nickname. There is a well-established tradition of representing soldiers as children and reinforcing the maternal qualities of the state. Little Charlie Russell is an early prime example. The *Mother Canada* statue “evokes a long and potent tradition of both state and civilians mobilizing motherhood as the symbol of sacrifice in wartime” (Evans). The symbolic mother was a potent image for wartime propagandists and recruiters. Depictions of good and bad motherhood were mobilized to garner support for the war and drive up recruitment numbers. To achieve his goal of mobilizing 500,000 recruits in 1916, Robert Borden and his team of propagandists enlisted a veritable army

of fictitious mothers for posters, pamphlets, and stories. One famous British example was an anti-pacifist letter, first published by *The Morning Post* in 1916, signed by “A Little Mother” who, despite allegedly only having one son, assured her readers that she would remain steadfast:

We women pass on the human ammunition of ‘only sons’ 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.

(A Little Woman)

From a modern perspective, this type of rhetoric might seem remarkably callous. At the height of the war, however, and in the face of immense community pressure to “do your bit,” these themes, which conflated motherhood with duty and sacrifice, were quite powerful. Canadian war novels have examined the maternal aspects of war whether by depicting literal mothers, as in *The Wars*, or by providing proxy mothers, as in *Generals Die in Bed* or *Execution*.

In the aftermath of the First World War, motherhood once again proved useful to those who wished to solidify the war’s narrative and legacy. Now, mothers were vessels of bereavement. There are few women depicted on war monuments, but the ones that are tend to be allegorical. They are mourning mothers, “portrayed in art and literature as grief-stricken but steadfast, holding true to [their] faith and ideals, and demanding that we remember and value the sacrifices they and their sons have made” (Evans). The *Never Forgotten* memorial is a testament to the fact that the figure of the grieving mother remains as compelling as ever. Though *Mother Canada* is supposedly meant to symbolize the country beseeching its war dead to return, it is undeniable that an identical symbol of

faithful motherhood was invoked to send them overseas in the first place. It is likely only a matter of time before such a powerful image is deployed once again for similar means.

All evidence points to the fact that the *Never Forgotten* memorial is not going to be an understated and solemn tribute to Canada's war dead – there are plans for a three-hundred car parking garage, a restaurant, an interpretation centre, and, unsurprisingly given the response to the Vimy Foundation, a gift shop.

Its impossible to watch the heated debate surrounding the statue on Cape Breton without hearing echoes of the quarrel surrounding the Vimy Ridge Memorial or the rhetoric of Borden and Meighen as the First World War came to a close. These historical reverberations prompt a disheartening question: has the Canadian perception of the Canadian soldier changed at all since the outbreak of the First World War? Is Canada still just a nation of Charlie Russells? In the popular imagination, the figure of the Canadian soldier has remained curiously static throughout the twentieth century and beyond. There is little substantive difference in how Robert Borden and Stephen Harper characterize the Canadian soldier who, despite the great upheavals of the twentieth century, has not been permitted to evolve past the faultless image of the chivalric knight of Arthurian Romance.

This utopian perception, however, is not in any way connected to the reality of actual Canadian soldiers, who face a multitude of challenges, including spotty access to healthcare, disputes over pensions, and the problems associated with PTSD. The Canadian government has struggled to adjust from an established system, which mostly entailed taking care of older veterans from the Second World War and the Korean War, to one that can adequately respond to the needs of younger veterans who served in

Afghanistan. Recent studies have indicated that Canada lags behind its closest allies in terms of compensating its veterans, especially those injured in the line of duty. The relationship between the government and its veterans has been strained since 2006 when the new *Canadian Veterans Charter* was passed into law, which drastically altered the system that awarded veterans their pension. The complex processes that govern collective memory, however, preserve the Canadian soldier's anodyne image.

If the image of the Canadian soldier has remained maddeningly static throughout the twentieth century, novelistic representations of the Canadian soldier have been remarkably diverse. Literature has afforded Canadian writers and readers the opportunity to conceive of the soldier in ways not permitted by traditional forms of commemoration. Novels, when they are nuanced, allow for the representation of a full person's interior life. Characters can transcend allegory and soldiers are permitted to be flawed human beings whose lives were understandably affected by war. It is no surprise, then, that novels offer a unique space for dealing with taboo aspects of the wartime experience. The soldier figure, in these novels, is transformed from nationalist vessel into a three-dimensional human being.

In recent novels, however, the Canadian soldier, once a figure of resistance, seems poised to become a conventional figure of national harmony yet again. Well into the twenty-first century, the subversive efforts of Montgomery, McDougall, and Findley have receded in favour of more traditional representations of the Canadian soldier. The second war book boom looks disturbingly like the first. Though many Canadian war novels are widely read, there is little discernable evidence that they have shifted perceptions of the

Canadian soldier in any significant way. War continues to be imagined and re-imagined as a catalyst that ushered Canada into better pastures.

The novels published in the early twenty-first century have not exactly been characterized by their innovation. Frances Itani's *Deafening* (2003) is characteristic of this regression. The novel is realist to a fault and "displays only residue of the postmodern attitude and aesthetic that had dominated Canadian historical fiction for at least two decades" (Gordon 74). The novel's plot is a conventional amalgam of *Bildungsroman*, war story, and romance. What is most retrograde about Itani's war novel is the way she fastens it to a narrative of progress. While Hodgins registers skepticism with the narrative of war as a necessary trial even if he also acknowledges its expedience for community building, Itani's version of the war is surprisingly conservative. A letter one character receives after his son is killed overseas is so rife with the rhetoric of war's glory that it may as well have been lifted from a Ralph Connor novel:

He died nobly and in service of the Empire and his King. I am able to say positively, from witness reports, that he was killed by a sniper's bullet while on night patrol in No Man's Land, and that he died instantly. I know it will relieve your worries that he did not suffer at the end. You should also know that one of our Canadian boys managed to kill the sniper almost immediately. It is most unfortunate that we were unable to recover your son's body. (292)

The modern reader, so accustomed to the postmodern distance of most later Canadian war writing, could be forgiven for expecting that this sentimentality be punctured with irony, but Itani does not provide it. In *Deafening*, the war is conceived of in purely personal rather than political terms, which allows Itani to obfuscate on whether or not the

loss of life was justifiable. The war is mostly represented as an obstacle to love – unpleasant issues like gender, class, and nationhood do not figure.

Joseph Boyden's *Three Day Road* follows the example set by Urquhart in *The Stone Carvers* by writing a traditionally marginalized group into the nation's most popular originary myth. Boyden's novel follows two young Cree men, Xavier and Elijah, who volunteer for the First World War. In the aftermath of the war, Niska, an Oji-Cree medicine woman who has steadfastly resisted assimilation, paddles a three-day journey to console her last remaining relative who has returned from the battlefields of France. Her nephew has returned to Canada a broken man, haunted by the trauma of the war and addicted to morphine. Niska comforts him by telling her stories of their shared heritage in the hopes of coaxing him out of his silence. Again, silence and the need to remember as well as narrativize experience is at the thematic forefront of a war novel. It is a political act because it takes place in the context of Cree resistance to assimilation and a strong oral tradition. Boyden asks how First Nations people "can make productive use of a past" (125) from which they were effectively marginalized, but does little to question the ideologies that propagate the comforting myths that surround the Canadian soldier.

Alan Cumyn's *The Sojourn* is a sensitive portrayal of the soldier's experience, but hews too closely to the stereotypical serviceman's narrative to be truly original: "A shell lands screaming in the field, hitting perhaps the exact spot where I'd been standing a few minutes ago. It causes a ripple in the body of the beast, nothing more. I glance back anxiously, try to see what, if anything, was obliterated" (274). As Jonathan Vance writes, "*The Sojourn* is a fine war novel in the classic mould, one that fits comfortably with Frederick Manning's *Her Privates We*, Richard Aldington's *Death of a Hero*, and the

other great novels of the late 1920s and early 1930s” (Vance). As Wiersema’s “premise fatigue” indicates, another novelistic depiction of a Canadian serviceman’s coming of age during the First World War is not exactly unprecedented in 2015.

One novel of the twenty-first century that does offer something new is the 2005 novel *Maclean* by Allan Donaldson. Donaldson marries the twin impulses of the modern Canadian First World War novel by having a veteran comment explicitly on the process of memorialisation. The novel depicts one day in the life of Maclean, a shell-shocked, alcoholic, and perpetually unlucky veteran of the First World War living in small town New Brunswick. Preventing Maclean from leaving his traumatic past behind is the presence of monuments and cenotaphs to those killed during a war that, by random chance, spared him. He cannot see his own experience depicted in the monument. For some perplexing reason, the town’s cenotaph prominently features a German field gun: “It was the only German gun he’s ever seen. They were always going to get the bastards who were shelling them, but they never did” (24).

Though ostensibly built to honour men like him, the cenotaph only alienates Maclean from his war experience:

The sides of the column were covered with tablets listing the dead, and as Maclean passed, names leapt out at him. Robert Cronk. Charles Simpson. Frank Gallagher. Old pals whose faces he sometimes had a hard time remembering, especially when he was sober, although sometimes when he was drinking. (24)

Donaldson’s representation of the veteran and the monument, however, affords a glimmer of hope that the traumatized veteran can reappropriate national efforts at memorialisation and resist erasure.

In an act of rebellion, Maclean falls asleep on the monument. Though he knows that if he is seen on the monument, it is likely that the police will be called and he will be escorted to jail, Maclean's time at the cenotaph constitutes a crucial reclaiming of the monument in the name of the war insider. He approaches the monument like a general surveying his troops: "He picked his way across the lawn to the cenotaph and walked around it, twice, very slowly, looking at the long column of names on the black tablets" (162). He does a roll call of names he knows are engraved into the monument: "He knew where every name was of the boys who had been his pals. Robert Cronk. Charles Simpson. Henry Noles. William Sperry. Frank Gallagher. Daniel McGrath. Ebenezer Watson. Edward McDade. Here. Here. Here." (162). These men no longer exist just in the abstract but become real: "Slowly, out of the great gulf of the past, the boys took shape around him. Bob, Frank, and Harry. Dan. Bill. Charlie. All just the way they had been before the bad things started to happen" (163). Although the novel's final image, of a man drawing his blinds on Maclean, suggests that the traumatized veteran will remain invisible to a certain extent, Donaldson allows for the possibility that the veteran may write himself into the narrative of the First World War.

This dissertation is not meant to say all there is to say about the Canadian tradition of war literature or even how the Canadian soldier is depicted. Far from it. The genre is still very much alive and any scholarship about it will have to be amended and reevaluated frequently. The emergence of new forms of warfare, drones and other forms of cyberwarfare for example, will inevitably affect how those who make war are perceived and represented. It remains to be seen how the image of the Canadian soldier will evolve in the coming decades. Will the yoke of chivalry be cast off? Or, will the

Canadian soldier's usefulness as a marker of collective memory and a signifier of national identity ensure that it remains as fixed as it has for most of the twentieth century? Hopefully, this study will serve as a significant starting point for anyone interested in the ideologically fraught, though remarkably resilient, figure of the Canadian soldier.

To conclude, it is important to note that attempts to generalize about war writing are going to be rife with contradiction. In 1915, the Irish poet W.B. Yeats neatly summarized his feelings about writing inspired by war. He wrote,

I think it better that in times like these
 A poet's mouth be silent, for in truth
 We have no gift to set a statesman right;
 He has had enough of meddling who can please
 A young girl in the indolence of her youth,
 Or an old man upon a winter's night. (205)

After the war, Yeats stayed true to his word when, in 1936, he was asked to edit *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, 1892-1935*. To the surprise of some, Yeats excluded the most famous of the war poets: Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon, Edmund Blunden were summarily dismissed. In his introduction, Yeats makes it clear that these omissions were not mere oversight:

I have a distaste for certain poems written in the midst of the great war; I have rejected these poems for the same reason that made Arnold withdraw his "Empedocles on Etna" from circulation; passive suffering is not a theme for

poetry. In all the great tragedies, tragedy is a joy to the man who dies; in Greece the tragic chorus danced. (xxxiv)

In a 1936 letter to Dorothy Wellesley, he writes, “When I excluded Wilfred Owen, whom I consider unworthy of the poets’ corner of a country newspaper, I did not know I was excluding a revered sandwich-board Man of the revolution... however if I had known it I would have excluded him just the same” (Wellesley 113).

Perhaps Yeats, a poet whose verse was always tinged with utopian nostalgia for a mythic past, was not the ideal reader for Owen’s starkly modern trench poems, but his resistance to Owen is indicative of the way in which the narrative of war in the twentieth century has been dictated by later critics and authors. It is a myth, perpetuated by Fussell and others, that a modernist/ironic zeitgeist defined the postwar era in totality. The myriad of literary responses discussed in this dissertation is testament to the fact that Romance and patriotism did not die with the publication of “Anthem for Doomed Youth.” For example, in 1923, the poet Henry Newbolt, a friend and admirer of Yeats, toured Canada. As many as 60,000 people attended his readings hoping to hear the patriotic poem “Vitae Lampada”: “Play up! play up! and play the game” (87). At that point, even Newbolt had grown to detest the poem, calling it his “Frankenstein’s monster,” but he still gamely humoured a Canadian crowd that was eager to hear that the British Empire still meant something.

How Canadians have continually used literature as a means of grasping what war is suggests that Yeats was mistaken. It is crucial that writers not be silent about war because as fewer and fewer Canadians are actually touched by conflict, literature is one of the only ways that war and the military can be contextualized. For most Canadians,

war can be very distant. One's proximity to it depends on a multitude of factors including class, race, and culture. As a result, many Canadians must work out their public feelings and, to a certain extent, their private feelings about war through novels, which is why it is so crucial that these novels represent soldiers in a manner that is commensurate with their experience.

Appendix – Canadian Novels about the two World Wars by Date of Publication*

- 1910-1919:** Stirling, Helen. *A Soldier of the King*. 1915
 Rae, Herbert. *Maple Leaves in Flanders Fields*. 1916
 Dancey, S.N. *The Faith of the Belgian: A Romance of the Great War*. 1916
 Connor, Ralph. *The Major*. 1917
 McClung, Nellie. *The Next of Kin*. 1917
 King, Basil. *The High Heart*. 1917
 ---. *The Lifted Veil*. 1917
 Bell, Frederick. *A Romance of the Halifax*. 1918
 Stead, Robert. *The Cow Puncher*. 1918
 Gibbon, J. Murray. *Drums Afar: An International Romance*. 1918
 Connor, Ralph. *The Sky Pilot in No Man's Land*. 1919
 Blewett, Jean. *Heart Stories*. 1919
 Beynon, Francis. *Aleta Day*. 1919
 Sinclair, Bertrand. *Burned Bridges*. 1919
 McKowan, Evah. *Janet of Kootenay*. 1919
 King, Basil. *Going West*. 1919
 King, Basil. *The City of Comrades*. 1919
 Arnold, Gertrude. *Sister Anne! Sister Anne!* 1919
- 1920-1929:** Baxter, Beverley Arthur. *The Blower of Bubbles*. 1920
 ---. *The Parts Men Play*. 1920
 King, Basil. *The Thread of Flame*. 1920
 Sinclair, Bertrand. *Poor Man's Rock*. 1920
 Stead, Robert. *Denison Grant*. 1920
 Montgomery, L.M. *Rilla of Ingleside*. 1920
 Gibbon, J. Murray. *The Conquering Hero*. 1920
 Sinclair, Bertrand. *The Hidden Places*. 1922
 King, Basil. *The Happy Isles*. 1923
 Sinclair, Bertrand. *The Inverted Pyramid*. 1924
 Wilson, Henry Beckles. *Redemption*. 1924
 Connor, Ralph. *Treading the Winepress*. 1925
 Cox, Carolyn. *Stand By*. 1925
 Stead, Robert. *Grain*. 1926
 Acland, Peregrine. *All Else is Folly*. 1929
- 1930-1939:** Beames, John. *An Army Without Banners*. 1930
 Harrison, Charles Yale. *Generals Die in Bed*. 1930
 Neil, Stephen. *All the King's Men*. 1934
 Cobb, Humphrey. *Paths of Glory*. 1935
 Fillion, Laetitia. *Yolande, la Fiancée*. 1935
 Niven, Frederick. *Old Soldier*. 1936
 Child, Philip. *God's Sparrows*. 1937
 Vinton, V.V. *To the Greater Glory*. 1939

1940-1949: Baird, Irene. *He Rides the Sky*. 1941
 Sallans, G.H. *Little Man*. 1942
 Heighington, Wilfrid. *The Cannon's Mouth*. 1943
 Graham, Gwethylan. *Earth and High Heaven*. 1944
 Hutchison, Bruce. *The Hollow Men*. 1944
 Child, Philip. *Day of Wrath*. 1945
 Roy, Gabrielle. *Bonheur d'occasion*. 1945
 Allen, Ralph. *Home Made Banners*. 1946
 Meade, Edward. *Remember Me*. 1946
 Nablo, J.B. *The Long November*. 1946
 McCourt, Edward. *Music at the Close*. 1947
 Shapiro, Lionel. *The Sealed Verdict*. 1947
 Elliot, A.J. *The Aging Nymph*. 1948
 Haig-Brown, Roderick. *On the Highest Hill*. 1949.
 Richard, Jean Jules. *Neuf Jours de Haine*. 1949
 Garner, Hugh. *Storm Below*. 1949
 Birney, Earle. *Turvey*. 1949

1950-1959: Shapiro, Lionel. *Torch for a Dark Journey*. 1950
 Elie, Robert. *La fin des Songes*. 1950
 Gelinas, Gratien. *Tit-Coq*. 1950
 Langevin, André. *Evadé de la nuit*. 1950
 Levine, Norman. *The Angled Road*. 1952
 Vac, Bertrand. *Deux portes... une adresse*. 1952
 Walker, David. *The Pillar*. 1952
 Hemp, Pierre. *Hormidas le Canadien*. 1954
 Vaillancourt, Jean. *Les Canadiens Errants*. 1954
 Shapiro, Lionel. *The Sixth of June*. 1955
 Walker, David. *Harry Black*. 1956
 McCourt, Edward. *The Wooden Sword*. 1956
 McDougall, Colin. *Execution*. 1958
 Findlay, D.K. *Search for Amelia*. 1958
 Gagnon, Maurice. *Les chasseurs d'ombres*. 1959

1960-1969: Allister, William. *A Handful of Rice*. 1961
 Childerhouse, R.J. *Splash One Tiger*. 1961
 Martel, Stephen. *In the Forest of the Night*. 1961
 Jackson, James. *To the Edge of Morning*. 1964
 Le Pan, Douglas. *The Deserter*. 1964
 Bosworth, Fred. *The Atonement of Ashleu Morden*. 1964
 Allen, Ralph. *The High White Forest*. 1964
 Shelley, Sidney. *Bowmanville Break*. 1968
 John Cornish. *A World Turned Turtle*. 1969

1970-1979: Findley, Timothy. *The Wars*. 1977

1980-1989: Kogawa, Joy. *Obasan*. 1981

1990-1999: Ondaatje, Michael. *The English Patient*. 1992
Major, Kevin. *No Man's Land*. 1995
Michaels, Anne. *Fugitive Pieces*. 1996
Urquhart, Jane. *The Underpainter*. 1997
Hodgins, Jack. *Broken Ground*. 1998

2000-2009: Urquhart, Jane. *The Stone Carvers*. 2001
Swan, Mary. *The Deep*. 2002
Itani, Frances. *Deafening*. 2003
Cumyn, Alan. *The Sojourn*. 2003
Boyden, Joseph. *Three Day Road*. 2005
Cumyn, Alan. *The Famished Lover*. 2006
Poole, Michael. *Rain Before Morning*. 2006
Slade, Arthur. *Megiddo's Shadow*. 2006
Poliquin, Daniel. *A Secret Between Us*. 2007
Donaldson, Allan. *Maclean*. 2007
Huston, Nancy. *Fault Lines*. 2008

**This list is provisional and will be updated to include more recent titles.*

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